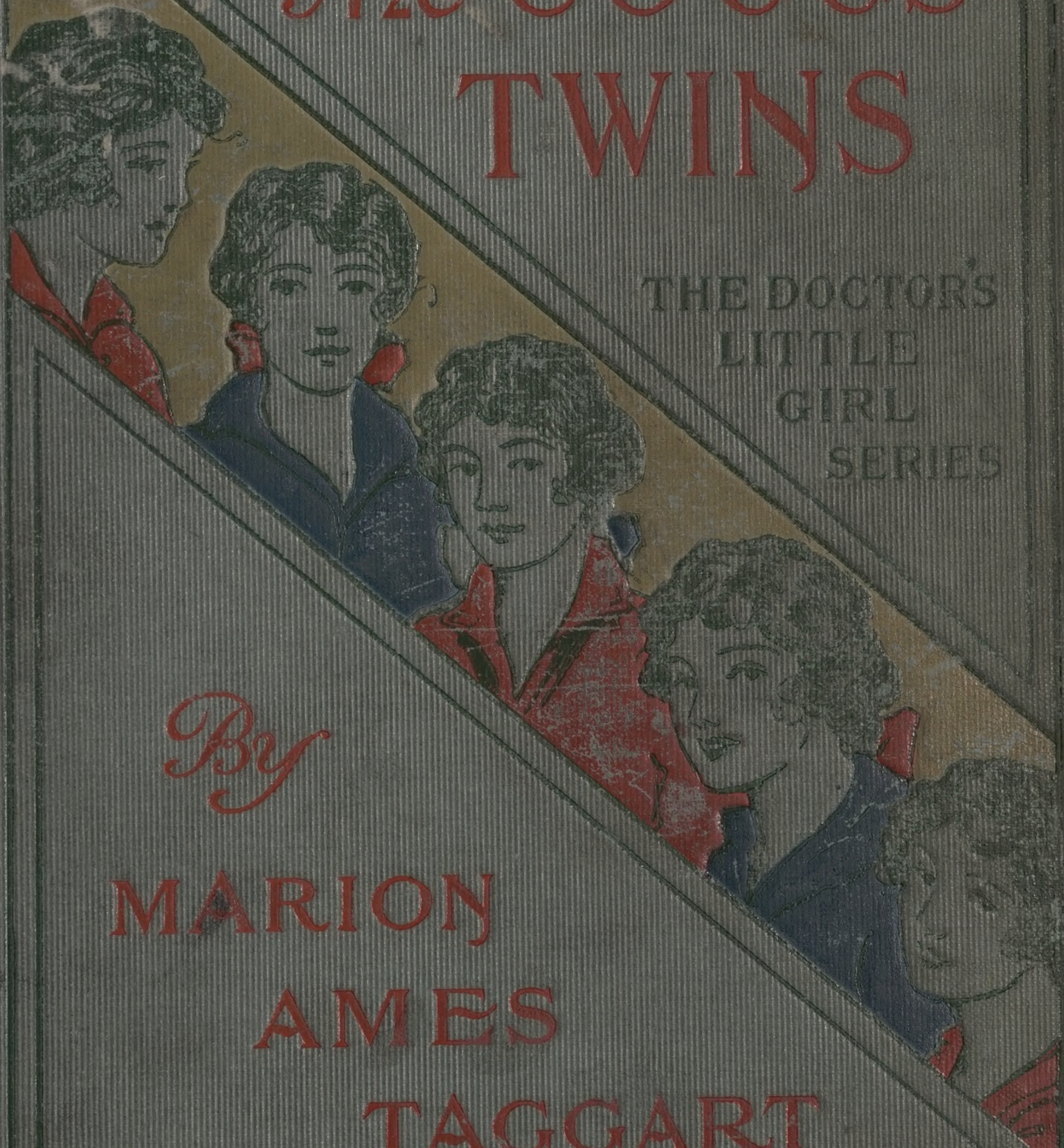
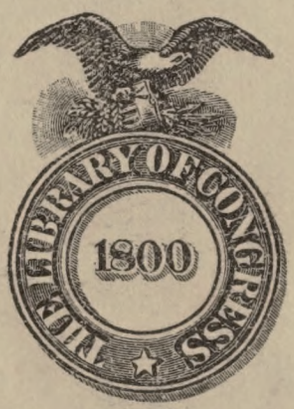
NANCY and the COGGS TWINS



THE DOCTOR'S LITTLE GIRL SERIES

By

MARION AMES TAGGART



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NANCY AND THE COGGS TWINS

WORKS OF

MARION AMES TAGGART

The Doctor's Little Girl Series

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THE DOCTOR'S LITTLE GIRL

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NANCY, THE DOCTOR'S LITTLE PARTNER

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NANCY AND THE COGGS TWINS

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The Doctor's Little Girl Series

NANCY

and the

COGGS TWINS

BY

Marion Ames Taggart

Author of "The Doctor's Little Girl," "Sweet Nancy," "Nancy, the Doctor's Little Partner," "Nancy Porter's Opportunity," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

John Goss

BOSTON

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"TAIZIE HAD ATTAINED HER DESIRE, AND RAN THE BIG CAR HERSELF." (*See page 223.*)

TO

Blanche

WITH LOVE

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NANCY AND THE COGGS TWINS

CHAPTER I

MAIZIE, DAISY, TAIZIE AND HAZIE

FOUR tired girls had come in from their day's work. They were little girls, or would have been so labelled if they had been coming home from school into a real home, with a mother in it. But because they came home from their day's work they were merely four young girls.

They looked so much alike that they could not be less than sisters, and might have been more; it was puzzling how they could be sisters and be all four, apparently, the same age. And they managed this by actually being more than sisters — they were two pairs of twins, Maizie and Daisy, Taizie and Hazie, the older pair fifteen, the younger pair, fourteen years old.

They were not pretty girls, but nobody would have minded that, for they were attractive. They had

bright reddish hair that stood up cheerfully around their merry faces; round rosy faces they were, with large, jolly mouths and strong even white teeth and a chronic smile, short straight noses, and blue eyes that snapped and danced with the laughter that wrinkled them into fine lines in their corners.

The older pair wore dark blue dresses of a heavy cotton material, the younger pair dark skirts and shirtwaists; the older pair worked in a big department store, wrapping parcels; the younger pair were errand girls in the same dressmaking establishment. Entirely alone in the world these young creatures were earning their living and looking after themselves, as unafraid as the sparrows chattering outside their window. They had a room in a cheap tenement, which they had hired from the tenant of the remaining four rooms constituting the flat. It was a dark room, but, as Maizie pointed out, that did not matter, because they were away all day, except Sunday, and then they could "hang around somewheres." It was a cheap room because it was a dark one, and when there is not much money a low rent counts for more than light to four young owls who can only see their nest at night.

The room was sparsely furnished. A table held the three-burner gas stove on which the girls cooked what little was cooked there. It had to be disconnected from the gas to get illumination from it, so there was also a lamp. There were four chairs, of sorts; the

beds were two mattresses and bedding, without the extravagance of bedsteads. In the morning the girls piled one cotton mattress on the other and folded up the clothing before going to work, by way of setting in order for the empty day while they were gone.

It was a dreary, not to say ghastly existence for four young things in the first two years of the 'teens, yet these two pairs of Coggs twins — that was their unmusical last name — managed to have bright color, laughing eyes and gay spirits on their unwholesome fare, badly prepared, and the sound sleep they tumbled into on their forbidding beds. But how long this lively health and jollity would hold out under such conditions was a question.

"Hullo!" Daisy said, as the younger pair came in, half an hour after she and Maizie had returned. "Anything?"

This was the shorthand manner of demanding the day's news.

"Say, we're right in it!" announced Taizie. "Haze —"

"I'll tell my own news!" interrupted Hazie. "Got a rise! What d'you know about that!"

"Oh, say! Honest?" cried Maizie and Daisy together.

Hazie nodded hard. "Fifty cents per," she affirmed. "Go ahead, Taizie."

"Mine ain't so much, 'cause it ain't steady, like

Hazie's, but a woman where I took a grand dancing-dress home to-day give me a dollar. That ain't so worse, either."

"Well, I just guess not!" cried Maizie, who was recognized for some unknown reason as the head of the family. "It makes you get one-third more this week than your wages!"

"How'd you get that so easy?" asked Taizie admiringly. "I counted up myself and got that, too, but not right off the bat, like you. Sometimes I'm dead sure you'll get rich, Maizie Coggs, you're that quick!"

"Say, I guess there's a streak o' Coggs luck on tap," said Daisy. "I found a nickel in a crack in the store floor to-day. But I blew it in on one of those fortune teller little green birds with a bill on 'em like a hook nose. There was a dago woman had 'em on the sidewalk. And that little green feller walked right along — hitched along the stick they sat on — and pulled out a card for me. I had to hand it back, but it told on it I was going on a journey. And it had a piece on it, too. It said:

"Keep your heart up and your pluck,
You are born to wealth and luck;
There's a grand man and a true,
Who will live and die for you."

Daisy recited this bit of choice doggerel with emphasis on all the insignificant words, reducing it to sing-song.

"Great fortune!" said Maizie scornfully. "All the wealth that'd give you would be funeral expenses for the man. About the best thing you could do with *that* bird'd be to use him for Thanksgiving dinner."

"Well, I'd rather go to the movies than spend five cents I found on a bird that didn't have any more for his money than that piece," added Taizie. "I bought ten cents' worth of potato salad at the della cattessen with ten cents out of my dollar. The man said, being it was night and folks had bought supper, he'd give me over. And he did. Look at here; the wooden dish's heaped — fifteen cents' worth, every bit of it."

Taizie produced her contribution to the family well-being with triumph, conscious of being a good sister in sharing her luck, and of having made a good bargain.

The four girls bustled around and got supper. Taizie's potato salad held the position of honor on the table. They set the other end of the table, leaving the gas stove attached and using the lamp, because they were heating water to add to the coffee and to wash dishes later on. They economically set away the coffee pot with the grounds from breakfast to be used again at night.

For the rest, their supper consisted of bread, soused mackerel, a box of small ginger cookies, so hot that their ginger must have been mixed with cayenne pep-

per, while their surfaces looked like a physical geography map.

These four girls, who were hardly more than children, earned, between them, fourteen dollars a week, but when rent comes out of that, and food and clothing for four hard-working, growing girls, there isn't much to spare. There had been one horrible time when Hazie was ill and there was nothing saved up. It was a time spoken of, even by these irrepressible, jolly girls, with lowered voices and quick-coming gloom in their laughing eyes. When Hazie was better, and the first and worst consequences of her illness survived, Maizie had declared that there must be a sick fund established, something laid by each week to meet emergencies, and the rule had been rigidly adhered to. There are not many pennies in fourteen dollars with which to do so much, so meals were necessarily frugal.

They were merry meals, nevertheless. The double twins loved one another devotedly. They told one another the history of each day, recounted all their adventures, burlesqued every one and everything that had amused them, sang the latest song, if one girl had heard a new one, were funny, clever, gay. They had such good times that their laughter rang out in the gloomy flat, and made their dingy neighbors envious, wistful, or happy, according to the dispositions of the people hearing the noise in " the Coggs' room." To-night it was Taizie who was chief entertainer. It

often was Taizie; if there was one of the double twins livelier, better at acting and singing than the others, it was this one of the second pair.

Taizie leaned back in her chair, gesticulating with a bread crust.

"When we're rich, just richer'n oil, I'm going to have a car like I saw to-day," she announced. "It was redder'n' shinier'n a bottle in a drug store, 'nd had stripes on it, green stripes with a gold edge to 'em, an' glass! Say, maybe it didn't shine — brass, too!"

"Well, Taizie Coggs," protested Hazie. "I saw that, too; it's a cigar thing! I guess I wouldn't have a tobacco car! I'll have one of the great long, sneaky kind you can't hear till you're hit; you hear it going by after you're dead. Mine'll be dark red, outside, and inside cushions just the same color. And I'll have a bonnet all made of flowers sewed on solid, and a veil that'll fly till you'd think it was one end on me and the other end over in Brooklyn. And the way I'll sit up and take notice'll give you a fit. You'll all be along, but if one of you acts as if she cared when we meet a circus procession, she'll be sorry! I ain't going to act 'sif I thought one bit more of that car and riding 'round with other folks walking than if I was a marble bust."

"Well, Hazie, what's got the matter with you?" cried Daisy. "When we say what it'll be when we're rich we don't make it like that, not ever! It's all fixed

that we're just going to have the biggest time ever, and make everybody else have it, too, but we ain't going to do any stiff ramrod acts. I'm going to ride along nodding till they'll all say I'm crazy, just to show I ain't forgetting — " Daisy ended with a wide gesture embracing the entire room. Her sentence needed no words to declare what it was she meant to remember when she was prosperous.

" Oh, I got kind of a jolt to-day," said Hazie, with heightened color. " There's a girl at Madame's thinks she's got first prize in the cattle show. Taizie was out; she got smarty-cat. I sort of thought a nifty car like that giddy one I saw, spattering a little mud on her would be about my size — for a change."

Maizie shook her head. " No good, Hazie," she said kindly. " No good, and no go. It's straight fun for ours, no pickles! When we get rich we'll take her out in our car, but we won't get grouchy before or after. Land, everybody can't be decent; there's millions, four or five, in New York! I don't know as I'll have a car. I kind of think maybe I'll get a moving-picture theatre of my own and a merry-go-round and look at movies free half the day and go around on the horses the other half."

It was one of the chief joys of these two sets of twins to plan nightly what they would do when they were rich. It began to seem to them like a settled fact that one day they were to be removed from their pov-

erty and have all the desires of their hearts gratified.

"We'll practise riding the merry-go-round now," said Taizie.

Whereupon she turned her chair sidewise to the table, mounted it as if it had been a saddled horse, and jogged and jarred around the room. With a hoot of rapture her own particular twin followed on her chair. Maizie and Daisy promptly fell into line and in a moment there was a pandemonium of four pairs of wooden feet violently striking the floor in alternation with four more pairs of wooden feet, all propelled by four pairs of human feet which seemed to be a part of four riotous young human voices, all shrieking with laughter and exploding into meaningless words.

It was not strange, with all this noise going on, that knocking at the door was not heard. It repeated itself many times before Hazie cried:

"Hark! I hear something!" and the chair steeds stood still.

Then the knock, recognizing the sudden silence as intended to give it a chance, fell once more on the panel of the dark door.

"Houlihan!" cried Maizie. It sounded like an exclamation, but she meant it for an announcement of her next door neighbor.

"Come in!" cried Daisy, getting off her chair; the other three twins also stood.

To their boundless surprise and consternation the door opened and revealed a thin, dark-haired, dark-eyed man, irreproachably clad, who removed his hat from a head so smooth and glossy that it looked like metal, and said to the panting girls:

"Are these the Misses Coggs?"

"We're the Coggs twins, two pairs," said Maizie after a pause, obeying the visible pokes of her sisters to make her speak.

"I thought so," said the stranger, blandly unconscious of the rapid, but useless smoothing which the girls were giving their brilliant and tousled hair, the blank shock written on their faces. "Miss Mary Coggs, Miss Margaret, the elder twins, if I am not mistaken; Miss Teresa and Miss Hazel, the younger, I think. If you please, I should like a few words with you. I have something that is of the utmost importance to you to lay before you."

"Have a chair," said Daisy, recovering herself to a degree.

The visitor seated himself on Daisy's steed, now restored to its proper office. The four twins also seated themselves. As there were but four chairs Taizie turned up a box and sat on that. They all pulled their skirts down over their knees with precisely the same motion, and regarded the stranger with a gravity that held fear and curiosity.

"Now that I see you more plainly I find that it

"THEY . . . REGARDED THE STRANGER WITH A GRAVITY THAT HELD FEAR AND CURIOSITY."

would be impossible for a stranger to tell you apart; not only that, but to decide which was the elder, which the younger pair of twins. You are wonderfully alike," he said.

"There's ways of telling after you're used to us," said Maizie. "But we're awful much alike, I know." She spoke apologetically.

"My name is Carberry, Henry Keane Carberry. I am a lawyer, and I want you to consider me one of your friends, my dears," the twins' visitor introduced himself.

The girls pricked up their ears, especially Maizie and Taizie. This sounded interesting to all four of the girls, but it sounded more than that to Maizie and Taizie. Not for nothing had they gone to vaudeville theatres in the cheapest seats of the topmost gallery. They knew that wildly exciting events in plays began in this way, by the coming of a lawyer whom no one knew, but who introduced himself in words similar to those used by Mr. Carberry.

None of the girls spoke or moved; they sat regarding their caller with alert and strained attention, listening for what he should say next with much the air with which a cat listens at a mouse's hole.

"My dear twice-told twins, if I may so call you, what do you know about your mother?" Mr. Carberry asked. "What was her name before she married?"

All four tawny heads shook at once. Maizie replied for them all.

"We don't know what her name was. We don't know hardly anything about her. She died when that pair was fourteen months old, couldn't walk yet, and we was just a little more'n two, Daisy and me. So we don't know who she was. Our father died when that pair of twins was two months old. His name was Coggs. We was taken to be raised by a woman. She was poor, but she took all of us, meanin' to raise us to work. She died two years ago, so all she got out of it was the bother. She wasn't so bad; we was sorry she died on us, but we got along." Maizie told this brief history calmly, indicating the younger pair of twins with a nod at them when they appeared in it.

"And how it happened that the Society for the Protection of Children did not get hold of you and put you into the proper hands to complete your bringing up, is a mystery!" exclaimed Mr. Carberry.

"Well, we didn't mean they should," cried Maizie. "A woman — she hires this flat — said she'd look after us; I guess the Society wasn't on. Say, you belong to it?" Maizie broke off with a look of terror which was reflected on the three other twin faces.

"And if I did, what then?" asked Mr. Carberry.

"Oh, for goodness' sake! When we've got along good so far, don't, oh, please, *please* don't butt in and

send us off into 'sylums, shut us up! We're all right, honest to goodness, we are!" cried Maizie in a panic.

"Yes, honest to goodness, we're getting on fine!" echoed Taizie, with equal appeal.

"Don't be alarmed, double twins," laughed Mr. Carberry. "I am not an agent for the Society; I am not even a member of it. I came here to-night to tell you that your mother was Mary Margaret Debbs before she married William Coggs, who was an Englishman and your father."

"Then she named the first pair after her. How'd you find out?" cried Taizie.

"I am a lawyer, and it is part of a lawyer's practice to find out facts of this sort. A trifle that came to light in connection with other business gave me the first clue to your parentage. Since then I have followed up the clue and worked it out to complete and important results. Your mother's father is old Peter Debbs, who owns large, prosperous mills at Chagford Falls, Massachusetts. He is immensely wealthy, at least twice over a millionaire; he is childless, your mother was the only child he had that lived to grow up. He was a poor man when she was about your present age and she left home to earn her living, married and was lost to him. He never knew what had become of her. My efforts have given me these facts. I have been working on the case for months; it is

complete now, and it is time that you were told that your grandfather is found and is a man of great wealth." Mr. Carberry told this amazing story without enlarging upon its plot; indeed the mere facts were so stunning that he could not have heightened their effect. He closely watched the four young faces before him to see their expression when his story had filtered into the double twins' consciousness.

Maizie, Daisy, Taizie and Hazie turned fiery red with a flush that ran up into their tawny, frowzy hair and seemed to increase its reddishness.

Taizie deliberately arose and executed a walk-around in a small circle before her chair, head on one side, her face absurdly grave. Then she sat down again.

"Well, what — do — you — know — about — that!" exclaimed Daisy in a stunned way.

"Are we — what d'you call 'ems? The folks that come in for money?" asked Hazie.

"Yes, that's it!" Maizie said. "Does this old man who's rich somewhere know about us? Do we — are we in it? What's next? Anything doing for the Coggs twins?"

Mr. Carberry saw the anxiety in her face, heard it in her voice, recognized that her questions sounded flippant only because she did not know how to ask them in any other than slang terms. They represented Maizie's sense of responsibility, and a dawning reali-

zation that something might be expected of these fantastic twins as heirs to great wealth.

"Your grandfather, Peter Debbs, has been seen, Miss Maizie," Mr. Carberry replied. "I am obliged to tell you that he has not been enthusiastically pleased to hear that he had grandchildren. The proofs laid before him are enough to convince any man, but he is slow to admit them. You see, Mr. Debbs lacks education and is old. People of that sort are hard to move."

"Most folks are," said Daisy, with the wisdom born of experience far beyond her years. "Most everybody is as stuffy as a stone when you first try to make 'em do anything."

"That is often true," agreed Mr. Carberry politely. "At any rate, your grandfather is what is called 'set in his ways.' He has to have time to accept the surprising news of your existence. He is supposed to be looking into the proofs which I have laid before him. There is no getting away from them. You certainly are his grandchildren, and, sooner or later, he must acknowledge you."

"If he does a-college us, or whatever you said, what happens next?" demanded Maizie.

"I think there is no doubt that he will be persuaded to settle upon you a considerable sum of money, in order to allow you to live, and be fitted to live, in a manner suitable to four young ladies who will be the heirs to immense wealth," said Mr. Carberry. "Mr.

Debbs does not strike me as a generous, nor an affectionate person, but, I fancy, he has a sense of justice. If not, public opinion, if not the law, would compel him to provide properly for the children of his sole child, the only creatures of his own blood now living."

"Gee!" exclaimed Taizie under her breath, not flippantly, nor slangily, but in a fervent way, as if the syllable were almost a prayer.

"Every word you say is dead easy, but it kind of goes along so smooth that it's hard understanding," said Maizie candidly. "You mean that we'll get enough to keep us till this man — grandfather — dies? Not that I want him to die; I'm just asking."

"Enough to live on and to be educated, so that when all Mr. Debbs' wealth comes to you, you'll be ready to use it," said Mr. Carberry.

"Oh, say!" cried Daisy, too stirred for further utterance.

"I'd like to know if you ever heard the like?" demanded Taizie, growing dangerously purple, from emotion. "Most every night we say what'll happen when we get rich and here's you, coming here — What'd we have for supper, girls? Would you mind setting that alarm clock upside down, so when you're gone we'll know you was here and we didn't fall asleep and dream you, Mr. Carb?"

"I'd like to know how we could dream a Peter Debbs and a — something — Falls we never heard of,

Taizie?" demanded Hazie, as Mr. Carberry laughingly did as Taizie requested and reversed the clock.

"Then what do we do now?" asked Maizie.

"I think it would be well for you to go to Chagford Falls, to be there, near your grandfather," said Mr. Carberry, resuming his seat after he had stood the clock on its folded-down top ring. "It would be convenient to have you at hand when he is ready to acknowledge you. If he were not willing to do so, it would be best to have you there, on the other hand, to bring the weight of public opinion on him by letting his own townspeople know his granddaughters."

"Is it far?" asked Maizie. "And how'd we live there while we was waiting? We've got work here."

"The journey takes about five hours by train. It was my idea that you should get employment in the mills at Chagford Falls while the matter was hanging. I am glad to see that you are prudent, Miss Maizie, though you are so young, and evidently impulsive," said Mr. Carberry kindly.

"Maybe they wouldn't give us a job," suggested Hazie.

"They would, though," returned Mr. Carberry. "I have made sure of that. The overseer is ready to take you on, all four of you, when you appear. When could you go?"

"Well, we couldn't walk off and not give the people we work for a chance," said Maizie. "Of course

there's dead loads of girls ready to jump in, but you've got to get 'em. We could start Monday, I s'pose. We don't get a chance to save up much. What's it cost to go? Should we sell our stuff?" Maizie made a gesture toward the almost bare room.

"I think it would be wise," said Mr. Carberry without a smile. "If you please, I will lend you the money for your journey; you may return it when you can."

"Thank you," said Maizie doubtfully. "Say — I've got to find out, you know — what's in this for you? Will you get paid for finding us — or what?"

Mr. Carberry looked smilingly at this young creature of fifteen whose knowledge of life made her know that he could not be acting from entirely disinterested motives.

"You are right to find out, Miss Maizie," he replied. "I shall get back all and more than I lend you. I shall be paid for finding you, yes. I expect to make a nice sum for my work, so you need not be afraid that I am too good to be true. It is entirely in the way of business, as to my part of it, though I am sincerely glad to set four such brave, pleasant little girls on the road to luck."

This answer satisfied Maizie. She drew a long breath of relief.

"That's good," she said frankly. "I guess you took hold of us something like a ticket in a raffle. If it draws, all right; if you lose, grin and bear it!

That's straight, and now I don't mind standing in with you. I kinder hate charity, and I wouldn't of liked you to do work hunting us up if you wouldn't get a good bit for it. I guess it's a go, is it, girls?"

"Sure," said Taizie. "If we all get a job in the mills down there, wherever 'tis, we'll get on. I'd like to go travelling. We never went anywheres further'n the Bronx, and you go there on a trolley, not a train," she added, explaining to Mr. Carberry.

"Besides, it's spring, and it would be kinder swell to go off to the country," said Hazie. "Is it country?"

"Chagford Falls is a small town; it is country in comparison to New York, yes," said Mr. Carberry. "There is one more twin to be heard from?" He looked at Daisy.

"Well," began Daisy slowly. "New York's good enough for me, and that's the truth. But you don't get so awful much of the good-enough when you hustle out every morning to work and tie up bundles all day, with a bottle light hanging over your nose, and hustle back here at night to eat and go to bed. I say, let's gamble on this grandfather and risk going where you send us, though we don't know you, and maybe you're sending us off to a frankförter factory, to get ground up, instead of to some mills to work."

"Daise!" cried Maizie, somewhat shocked.

"That's all right, Miss Maizie. I don't in the least mind your twin's frankness," laughed Mr. Carberry. "My dear little girl, I have a daughter nearly as old — or as young! — as you. I would not send you into danger; you will not find the 'frankförter factory' where the mills should be! At the worst, you would be better off in Chagford Falls than here in this darkness and hard work for small pay. But I think that there is no doubt that in a short time you are to be wrapped in luxury and find the wildest dreams you ever dreamed come true. You are going to be healthy, wealthy and wise in no time! Healthy and wise you are now, sound, rosy girls, with keen wits and common sense, I'm glad to discover. And old Peter Debbs' grandchildren will be wealthy. So take this step in the dark without fear but that it will lead straight out into sunshine."

Mr. Carberry arose as he spoke and shook hands with each of the double twins in turn. "I'll attend to the arrangements for your journey; I'll see you again," he said.

The two pairs of twins bade him good-by with unwonted seriousness on their short, rosy faces.

For a moment after he had gone they remained silently and soberly regarding one another. Then Taizie emitted a whoop that might almost have reached the ears of Peter Debbs in Chagford Falls, Massachusetts.

"Rich! Us rich! Oh, clams, and shoot the chutes! What do you know about that!" she cried.

The four girls tore their folded bedclothing from its retirement and draped themselves in it. Then they executed a dance that would have done honor to the red men whom the Dutch found on Manhattan Island, uttering shrieks of wild excitement and leaping and whirling until they tumbled, exhausted but rapturous, in a fourfold heap of streaming ruddy hair and steaming ruddy faces in the middle of the floor. Thus these four young things resolved to meet their fate and to go out into the unknown with all the confidence, and no more knowledge, than young chickens have when bursting their shells.

CHAPTER II

THE DOUBLE TWINS MIGRATE

"LET'S give 'em away!" cried Daisy Coggs. "What's the use of selling such a little? We'll give our bed-clothes and the beds to Mrs. Flynn up-stairs, because she has such a lot of children. And our gas stove to Mrs. Houlihan, and our chairs to Mrs. Cohen. The dishes — there ain't many! I'd sorter like to smash them after we've eat our last meal, so's we could have a noise for a send-off."

"Well, I guess we won't smash that plate with the horse on it we got with the coupons, Daisy Coggs!" cried her outraged twin. "We're going to move that with us, and the cup we — Hazie, wasn't it? — drew in the grab-bag that time they had a fair at St. Philip's and the priest stood us for a grab a-piece. I'm going to pack up whatever we've got nice like that; the poppies on that cup are great! One of us can carry the box. It would be kinder nice when we get 'way off in a strange place, like Chagford Falls, to see something we'd eat offen at home."

Mr. Carberry had been as good as his word, better, in fact. Not only had he made all the arrangements for the double twins' departure and had "seen them again," as he had promised, to explain to them their way of going, but he had offered to come for them and put them on the train when they started. This was a great relief to these girls to whom the Grand Central Station seemed like a monster, waiting to engulf them, likely to start them in any direction save the one in which they desired to go.

Mr. Carberry had shown them their tickets, four impressive bits of cardboard, but he had kept them, at Maizie's request, who feared they might be stolen from them if they were left in the room when the twins were all out.

The migration began to seem real to the double twins, to come out of the dreamlike wonder in which the three days had passed since they had learned that they had a grandfather and stand out as a reality.

Taizie and Hazie had been pleased to find their employer, the Fifth Avenue dressmaker with the French name and the Irish face, kindly regretful that the two trusty, good-natured little girls were to leave her. She was interested in their future.

"When you get to be grand ladies with a fortune, come back and let me make you some splendid costumes, girls," she said. "Sure, I'll be after makin'

'um the best I know, for old sakes' sake, or me name isn't Céleste Daupin, modiste."

Taizie and Hazie were unable to reply, even to thank her, being rendered absolutely speechless by the vision of that possible future in which the errand girls might return, the customers of this impressive establishment.

Then "Céleste Daupin, modiste," had made a parting present to the girls of a bill that equalled one week's earning by the pair and they departed, subdued, a little frightened, but rejoicing.

Maizie and Daisy were such an insignificant part of a vast machine-like department store that their going out of it called forth no consciousness of their existence from the heads. But their fellow-workers wished them well, and were sorry to see the last of them, while they were uncertain whether or not to believe the unlikely story that the girls told as the reason for their going.

The ruddy-haired twins were so obliging, so merry, so much above small meannesses and jealousies that their store-mates loved them, and truly said that they did not expect to find them replaced by their successors.

Thus all the small affairs of the double Coggs twins' old world were set in order, and the day dawned on which they were to go out into a new world and a greatly changed state of things.

Mr. Carberry appeared at the door and found the twins waiting. They were all four dressed in their working frocks, for that was all they had to wear in the street. Their jackets were short, their hats plain sailors of dark straw, with only a band around them, like a boy's hat. The twins struck Mr. Carberry as younger and more pathetic than ever before, as they sat clutching their slender earthly belongings, tied up in brown paper packages, with anxious excitement written on their flushed faces. The twins were so self-reliant, usually so jolly, that their unprotected condition hardly seemed pathetic, but to-day, for the first time, Mr. Carberry realized fully how narrowly this quartette escaped being children, going out in the world alone, like the babes in the wood.

"Ready? That's good!" he said heartily. "Let me take some of your belongings down. I have a cab at the door."

"My land!" cried Hazie. "We never rode in a cab but just once, when the woman that took us died and we went to her funeral, and we couldn't really enjoy the cab then, 'cause we was sorry she died."

"I guess we'll ketch the train, with a cab," said Taizie, betraying her dread of losing it.

They disposed themselves in the cab rapturously. There was no one to see them off. Mrs. Cohen, from whom they had rented their room, had bade them a kind, but indifferent good-by up-stairs, being hurried

with her Passover cleaning. In a neighborhood like the one that had sheltered the Coggs twins the passing of four young girls makes little more difference than the passing of the four wheels of an unknown wagon rolling by.

The girls leaned forward as they started, putting their heads as far out of the cab windows as their hats allowed.

Turning the corner of the stifling street Maizie leaned back and brushed her eyes with the back of her hand, boyishly, and caught her breath in a nervous laugh.

"Well, that's done," she exclaimed. "'Tain't much to be sorry for, but you kinder get used to the only place you know about."

In a moment the four twins were enjoying their drive to the utmost, making fun of themselves and of all they passed, in true Coggs fashion.

"I have not bought seats in the Pullman for you, children," said Mr. Carberry. "You'll be comfortable in the common car."

"Well, I guess!" cried Taizie, almost too excited to speak. "Our chairs wasn't so good as car seats; you know that, 'cause you sat on 'em."

Mr. Carberry laughed and helped the girls into the car, turned over a seat for them and disposed of their packages.

"Here are your tickets," he said, handing them to

Maizie. "You will not give them up, they will only be punched by the conductor, till you are near your journey's end. If you get hungry there is a dining-car ahead; go through to it and have a lunch. Don't leave the train till you get to Chagford. There are several parts, several townships in Chagford, Chagford Falls, North Chagford and I don't know what else! Chagford is the station for them all, at least the main one. You get out there. There is a trolley over to Chagford Falls; take that and go to the mills. Ask for Mr. Dermot, the overseer, tell him who you are, that I sent you, and that is all you will have to do. He will send you somewhere to a suitable boarding place and to-morrow you will begin to work. In a few days, or a few weeks at most, your grandfather will have acknowledged you and provided for you and the band will play for you that old air, played when Cornwallis surrendered: 'The World Turned Upside Down!' I shall go to Chagford when this happens, so shall see you again. Good-by, double twins! Good luck to you! Take care of yourselves, be careful what friendships you make, especially after you are wealthy. That will be the time when worthless human beings will seek you out, like birds of prey! Have you the twenty-five dollars I lent you, safe, Miss Maizie?"

"Yes, sir," said Maizie, with a quick movement toward the line where her stocking top must be. "It's

too much; we don't need money. Did you make out what you lent us, all of it?"

"You must not start off without any money, my dear," said Mr. Carberry. "Yes, I made a memorandum of what I had spent for you; here it is. The cab is my treat! What a particular little lady you are!"

"Well, we've got to pay it back. If we get rich, it'll be quick and easy. If we stay poor we've got to save up and earn it, but we'll get there in the end," said Maizie earnestly. "Good-by, and we're awful much obliged, honest to goodness, we are! Even if you did pick us up like a ticket to a turkey raffle, to see if there'd be anything in it, you've been awful nice to us, and we ain't going to forget it."

"No; that's right! We ain't," the other three confirmed her.

"Why, my dear, droll young persons, no one could help liking you and being interested in you!" said Mr. Carberry heartily, shaking hands and taking leave, as the jerk of the train announced that the engine was coupled to it.

No words could describe the joys and the marvels of that journey to Chagford! Though it took six hours, and not five, it was not a moment too long. The double twins frugally abstained from lunching in the dining-car; they had thoughtfully provided themselves with crackers and cheese and some cold meat

sandwiches. Buying a little fruit and a box of broken candy apiece from the boy who vended them on the train was more economical than a meal served in the dining-car. Besides, they all doubted their ability to go to the car, order the meal, or to eat it there, should they venture on the extravagance.

Happily they devoured the flying pictures from the car windows, varying the monotony by taking turns in riding backward in the reversed seat, to try how the world looked receding from them, instead of coming toward them.

It was Daisy who made a discovery.

"Say, girls," she announced, "this railroad ticket throws in a movie!" She pointed to the platform of a small station past which they flew without stopping and at the people congregated there to see the New York express go through.

"Yes, but the plays are mostly acted out by cows," giggled Taizie, as a meadow occupied by browsing Jerseys succeeded the station and the platform group.

It was spring, early spring in all its soft tints. The twins had never before seen so much of it in one wide stretch of loveliness, never had seen more of spring than was revealed by Central Park when a pleasant Sunday allowed them to go there.

Daisy struggled with her sense of its magic. Finally she said:

"Ain't it funny how pretty real homely things are

out here? Looks kind of everyway, just like pitchers you see in books, all kind of soft and — and not real! Look at that old barn with a pill sign painted on it! Ain't it nice, with the green?"

"It sure is," Maizie answered her twin emphatically. "Makes you feel all I-don't-know-how inside of you!"

Chagford is prettier seen from the train than the average town. As a rule, towns do not reveal their true selves to travellers, but rather show draggled ravellings of the materials from which they are made. As the train comes into Chagford the windings of the track give glimpses of the river and of peaceful streets; from first acquaintance Chagford is a lovable place.

The double twins dismounted upon the platform of the station, one behind the other, somewhat frowzy, decidedly flushed and — for them — timid.

The old man who pushed the baggage truck from the baggage-car at the front of the train to the baggage-room at the rear of the platform, was fond of telling, when the Coggs twins were famous in the countryside, how his had been first of Chagford eyes to see them and how amazed he had felt to see a succession of four girls, all precisely alike in looks, height, apparent age, descending, one after the other, down the car steps upon Chagford.

Outside the station the Chagford Falls trolley-car

was waiting. Maizie led the way to it and boarded it, with her three sisters following, not betraying the nervousness she felt.

The trolley bounced and bounded along, stopping seldom, through the pleasant highway that led to the Falls. The girls scarcely spoke to one another as they rode, but sat erect, bright-eyed, missing nothing of their new surroundings and liking them greatly. At a long, three-story building that covered, at least, the length of a city block, the car stopped. The conductor thrust his head into the door and pointedly announced: "Chagford Mills!" looking hard at the double twins. Maizie had asked him to let them know when they reached this point.

The four girls hastily gathered up their belongings and trooped out upon the sidewalk. It was a little past five o'clock and the mills were brilliant with the low sunshine reflected by the many window panes.

"My, but it's long!" ejaculated Hazie. "Where'd you s'pose you go in?"

"Where't says 'office,' of course," replied Maizie, putting on a bold front and going up to the door.

Opening it, she found that it led directly from the street into a square room, light and clean, but simple, wainscoted high with grained wood of a yellowish color, furnished in yellow oak, with no attempt at beauty. The only person in sight was a boy, who dropped his chair upon its four legs in letting his own

feet fall from the window sill, and sat erect, staring at the repeated apparition of one and then another, to the fourth girl with reddish hair under a sailor hat and a jolly, reddened face.

"Got 'em again, Tommy Giddings!" he exclaimed, taking himself by both ears and shaking his own head violently from side to side. "I knew you'd end bad if you didn't reform!"

"Is Mr. Dermot in?" asked Maizie, trying not to laugh.

For answer this remarkable office boy walked around the double twins and gingerly touched Taizie's sleeve.

"You ain't real, are you?" he asked. "What are you, anyhow? An Uncle Tom's Cabin Company, or what? Four alike's too many, two too many, too! A pair alike's about as many as anybody can believe in! Straight goods, what are you, honest? This gets me!"

"We want to see Mr. Dermot," persisted Maizie, checking Taizie and Hazie, who had gone off into convulsions of laughter. "You wait long enough and you'll find out what we are! But you tell me now where Mr. Dermot is."

"He's around," said Tommy Giddings, nodding his head in the general direction of the rest of the world. "Want I should fetch him? Poor old Dermot! I'll bet he'll fall down in a fit, and he's got a wife and

children! I'd better get him ready to see you; I'd hate like ginger to help carry him home on a stretcher and tell Mrs. Dermot he saw four girls all alike and knew it was a sign, so gave up right off."

"You go get Mr. Dermot," cried Maizie, giving up trying to keep a serious face. "You're a great office boy! It's your business to call Mr. Dermot and make no fuss if the whole Hippodrome comes in from New York."

"A Hippodrome isn't in it with four girls, all exactly alike, who ain't supposed to be a show," retorted Tommy Giddings, but with this remark he vanished.

"He's coming in a minute," said Tommy Giddings, returning. "He says he'll bet you're the Coggs twins. Are you? And how comes it there are four to a pair in twins where you hail from?"

"Two pairs, you silly!" cried Taizie. "It just happened we all look alike and are only a year apart."

"Well, I must say it's pretty hard on other folks, 'specially when you come on 'em suddenly and they are feeble-minded at best," said Tommy with a grin.

"That's you!" cried Taizie in high delight over this boy after her own heart, who was also about the double twins' average age.

Mr. Dermot came into the office, a tall man, somewhat formidable to look at, but the girls saw that Tommy did not fear him, so were reassured.

"Are you the Coggs twins, the double twins, Mr.

Debbs' grandchildren?" asked Mr. Dermot, holding out his hand, while Tommy stared, open-mouthed, at this amazing speech.

"I guess he hasn't decided to let us be grandchildren yet," said Taizie, giving her hand to Mr. Dermot, because she was nearest him and he seemed to expect it. "We're the Coggs twins all right. Mr. Carberry told us we had to come here."

"I know; I was expecting you," said Mr. Dermot. "I am going to employ you in the mill, I believe. It is sure not to be for long. Come to-morrow morning and I will put you to work. In the meantime you must have lodgings. I can send you to a respectable boarding-house where you can board comfortably."

"How much?" inquired Daisy.

"Board? Five dollars a week, two in a room. You will not earn that, for I must put you on beginners' wages, but you have other funds?" suggested Mr. Dermot.

"Not us!" cried Maizie. "We've got to live just as if there wasn't any Peter Debbs. 'S far's we know there ain't, either, even if he is our grandfather. And if he wasn't to turn out to be, we'd look nice boarding for more'n we could pay! Can't we get a room somewhere and feed ourselves? That's what we did in New York."

"I congratulate you, Miss Coggs, on your sense,"

said Mr. Dermot. "How about your aunt, Tommy? Would she have a room for these girls?"

"Dandy one," said Tommy, rallying somewhat from the complete prostration into which the conversation and the discovery he had made in regard to these four girls had thrown him. "She's got a good room, big and light, and she'll rent it for two-fifty. There's gas in it; they can cook."

"Take the Misses Coggs around there, Thomas. Explain to your aunt that they are almost certainly Mr. Debbs' grandchildren, but that till the proofs are established they are to work in the mills. Ask her to befriend them, to make them comfortable, for they don't know any one here, and I've no doubt she'll never be sorry for it. I'll excuse you for the half hour left of to-day," said Mr. Dermot. "Good night, young ladies. Hope you'll get on all right. Report at seven for work, please. We are obliged to dock late hands, fine them, you know."

"Good-by, sir; we're not the late kind," said Maizie turning to go, with her duplicates on her heels.

Tommy Giddings took his cap from its nail and followed after.

"I'll bet the fellows I know will rub this in, if they see me out with you," he said. "I can hear them asking whether I buy girls wholesale nowadays, and whether I don't order more'n one pattern."

"You can walk on the other side of the street, if

you'd rather," said Maizie with dignity. "And you can turn into the house alone; we'll keep our eye on you and come in later."

"Nixie, nit, not on your life!" affirmed Tommy. "This is good enough to be worth some joshing. It gets me! Honest truth, are you old Peter Debbs' granddaughters?"

"Gracious, we don't know!" cried Maizie. "The lawyer says we are. I s'pose we are; we must of had some grandfather. The lawyer hunted it up and he says it's a go. But this Peter Debbs is kinder brooding on it before he gives in."

"He's got some money!" observed Tommy. "Maybe you'll cut a wide swath some day."

"Well, now, you watch us!" declared Maizie. "We've got it all planned out; we've been so poor we couldn't of been worse, and if ever we get rich we're going to wear all the silks and satins and diamonds we can hang on, and we're going to have about as dandy a time as four girls ever had in this world!"

"Ask me to supper?" hinted Tommy.

"I guess!" laughed Maizie. "We're going to spread it out all over everybody we know. We're going to have the kind of good time that will spread out all over everybody."

"You're a pretty good sort, whoever your grandfather is!" said Tommy approvingly. "Here's where my aunt lives."

They turned into a house that sat somewhat back from the street, approaching the door by a narrow walk through a small yard.

Tommy's aunt proved to be his Aunt Elona Deacon, a widow of a melancholy cast of countenance and melancholy manner, whose forlorn ways led Taizie honestly to mistake her peculiar first name for "Aloner," and to think that it was given her because she was solitary.

After Mrs. Deacon had rallied from the shock of four girls alike, double twins, applying for her room, and from the greater shock of the probability that they were Peter Debbs' grandchildren sufficiently to allow her to take up the real point at issue, she proved entirely ready to rent the sisters her room at the reasonable rate quoted by Tommy and to arrange for their use of the gas at a sum that was fair. Since the girls had nowhere to go, they were installed at once, and Mrs. Deacon invited them to tea that first night, as it was too late for them to market for themselves. She graciously gave Tommy permission to stay, if he liked, though she told the girls that "Tommy was a trial, and how her own sister ever had such a boy she, for one, could not tell." The girls were quite able to see that these remarks were the thin disguise of his aunt's proud affection for Tommy.

It was a merry supper. The double twins helped to get it, Tommy peeled potatoes, and talk was rapid.

Mrs. Deacon was eager to hear the story of the Coggs girls' short life, they were ready to tell it, and it struck both the aunt and Tommy as a new wonder of the world that these four young things had battled alone with poverty and made their humble way in New York, that monster city which, to Mrs. Deacon's mind, was a sort of ogre, crunching the bones of the young and innocent upon which, in a sense, it lived.

"Oh, we got along good!" cried Taizie, when Mrs. Deacon gasped over an especially impressive description which Daisy gave of their dark room, their slender fare, their funny make-shifts for furniture and comfort. "Girls, does it seem's if we could have been in that very room when we woke up this morning, this very same morning, and this the night of it?"

"It sure does not!" cried Daisy emphatically. "I don't care if Peter Debbs isn't a grandfather, we've got it a lot better here than we had there."

Mrs. Deacon looked pleased at this speech.

"I'll try to have you comfortable here; I don't want you should lack anything within reason," she said. "Tommy's got to help me put up another bed in your room, then it'll be ready for you. You'd better get to sleep early, for you've had quite a day."

"Pretty good to be hiring a furnished room, ain't it?" suggested Taizie when, supper over, the second bed set up, Tommy gone, the double twins were left to themselves in their new room for the night.

"Well, didn't you think you'd fall over when she said she must put up another bed in here?" asked Daisy. "Two bedsteads, springs on both of 'em, and us used to a mattress a-piece and that's all! We're getting ready to be rich, getting used to fine things by inches."

"I'd tumble to 'em easy, however they happened along," said Hazie, illustrating her remark by a tumble into one of the beds and supplementing it with an "Oh!" of satisfaction when it proved to be comfortable.

"What d'you s'pose beginners' wages is that Mr. Dermot said he'd give us? Maybe, if we don't turn out Debbs grandchildren, we can't afford to stay here," said Maizie.

"Sure, we're Debbs grandchildren all right! Can't you feel it? Coggs and Debbs — short names and doubled up letters at the end — do you spell Debbs with double b? Kinder goes with Coggs. We're them all right. If we ain't, we're something else lucky. Get into bed, Maizie, so you'll wake up in time to find out what 'tis," said Taizie, following her twin.

Maizie laughed, and put out the light. The younger twins heard her sigh of contentment as she stretched her weary young body out in the comfortable bed in which Daisy was already silently luxuriating.

All four felt the strongest conviction that Taizie was right, and that if they were not this unknown Peter

Debbs' grandchildren, the heirs of millions, still they were the lucky Coggs twins and nothing would ever go seriously amiss with them. It was like them to ignore their past and present poverty as not worth counting a thing amiss. They were so jolly and easily pleased, so trusting of the future, that it did not seem likely that anything bad could await them.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST STEP ON THE NEW PATH

THE double twins presented themselves at the mill entrance the next morning twenty minutes ahead of time. Like the oysters, "their clothes were brushed, their faces washed, their shoes were clean and neat."

"We've got to be early," Maizie had said, "because some one's got to put us wise to the work, and it may take a while."

It never crossed the mind of one of the four to lie back and take life a little easier while they were waiting to find out whether or not they were on the high road to the greatest ease and luxury. This fact, which Mr. Dermot was quick to discern, combined with the bright morning faces which the four turned to him to say good morning, instantly made the double twins prime favorites with the mills' manager and overseer, independently of who they might prove to be.

"I shall put you in the easiest room, though it is not the one that beginners ordinarily learn in," said Mr. Dermot. "However, I think the work there is easiest understood. It isn't necessary to do with you precisely as if you were certain to remain mill workers."

"I guess the easiest room is the best for us," said Daisy with the cheerful Coggs laugh. "I guess we'll be pretty dumb at it."

Mr. Dermot himself conducted the twins into the room to which they were assigned, instead of handing them over to some one else.

This was so unusual that the girls who were to be their working-mates eyed them with surprise and some suspicion, ready to be jealous if they felt justified in being so.

Tommy had been solemnly charged not to betray to any one in the mill the fact that the newcomers might be the grandchildren of the mill owner. Sensibly, the Coggs girls wished to keep this a secret until the matter was settled.

Mr. Dermot handed them over to the superintendent of their room and left them. The double twins were assigned places together, out of consideration for their lack of other acquaintances, and the superintendent explained to them briefly what was expected of them.

Then he called over a tall, pale girl, who was, per-

haps, a year older than Maizie and Daisy, but who looked much more than that.

"Will you work beside these new girls to-day, Lora, and help them out if they get mixed up on the work? This is one of the most reliable hands we have and she will help you, if you need help: we call her — the other girls call her — Trusty, and that is far from a bad nickname!" The superintendent looked kindly at the girl, into whose pallor a faint flush was creeping.

"This is Lora Bruce. Lora, these are the Coggs girls, two pairs of twins, Mary, Margaret, Teresa, Hazel."

Lora looked at the four with quiet eyes, into which a smile began to creep.

"I hope you'll like it here," she said, as the superintendent went away. "I haven't an idea which name belongs to which girl."

"We don't use those names," said Maizie. "Daisy is Margaret, Taizie is Teresa, Hazie is Hazel, I'm Maizie — Mary. Maizie, Daisy, Taizie, Hazie, that's what we are." Maizie indicated the bearers of the names as she spoke.

Lora laughed, and the girls near enough to hear this list laughed, too.

The Coggs girls turned and beamed on their comrades.

"Ain't it funny?" cried Taizie. "Everybody

thinks it is; we do, too. We've made up a count about it; doesn't it sound like a count? It goes like this:

"Maizie, Daisy, Taizie, Hazie, Coggs and boggs and logs to blaze;
Maizie, Daisy, Taizie, Hazie, if you're it you can't be lazy,—
I-t, it, go tell the frogs, C-o-g-g-s spells Coggs. You are it!"

"For mercy's sake!" cried Lora. But she enjoyed it, and laughed till her cheeks were almost as red as the double twins' were. All the girls near — and most in the room had gathered around by this time to hear the fun — joined in the laughter.

The Coggs girls had a small triumph; they looked around with their merry eyes dancing, their red lips parted in laughter, showing their strong white teeth; their good nature was irresistible. The mill whistle blew at that moment, and a bell somewhere within the building rang, announcing to those outside that the gates were closed, and to those within that work for the day must begin.

The ice was broken, the Coggs girls were established. The dawning suspicious jealousy of them had vanished. The older hands were more than ready to accept them and to count such jolly creatures as these strangers a distinct gain to their room. The forenoon was not easy to the double twins. Maizie and Taizie were quick to see what was expected of them and their hands obeyed their nimble wits readily.

Daisy and Hazie were slower to learn, not as deft

in working. Lora kept her eye on them and helped them whenever they needed it, so, on the whole, the morning did not go badly, though the new experience was not easy to the double twins.

At the noon hour the entire mill became quiet at the sound of the bell that, in the morning, had set it in motion; the insensate machinery of the mill, that is to say. The bell that stilled the whirring wheels set loose a babel of tongues in every room and the shuffling sound of many feet, passing down the stairs and corridors, out of the main doors; many of the mill hands went home to their noon dinner.

"Do you go home?" asked Daisy of Lora.

Lora shook her head. "I live too far away," she said. "I bring my dinner. You're near; do you go home?"

"No," said Daisy. "We wouldn't of had a chance to cook anything to-day. We only came last night, so we haven't anything bought. We won't ever go out, anyway; 'twould take too long to get a dinner for ourselves. 'Tain't 's if there was any one at home to do it for us. We bought some things to eat to-day, but we're going to try to make something ourselves by and by. Mrs. Deacon said she'd show us. Country towns are awful different from big cities, ain't they? We never in this world would have had any one show us how to cook there."

"I always heard Mrs. Deacon was real kind," said

Lora. "I wish you'd tell me all about New York. What interesting girls you are! Four all alike, so jolly, and just looking after yourselves, living in New York and all! Do tell me about it!"

"You tell us how to work now and we'll tell you how we used to work; that's fair!" cried Taizie with her gay laugh. "Nothing interesting about it, but I guess it could be fixed up into a story, now I think about it. Who's that lady? Do people come here at lunch time? I hate visitors when I'm eating; chokes you up so!"

Lora looked across the room with sympathy for Taizie's dislike to eating under criticism. She saw a lady, tall, slender, quietly, but elegantly dressed. She had a highbred face, almost beautiful in its refinement, with the expression in the eyes of one whose thoughts were chiefly intent upon things within, yet whose interested sympathy was ready for anything beyond her own life that needed it.

She was not young, neither was she old, though she struck the double twins as elderly; she must have been nearly, if not quite fifty.

"Oh, that's Miss Belinda Allaire!" murmured Lora. "She comes here a good deal; she has a club of the mill girls. It meets at her house to read and sew and hear music. Miss Belinda is a great musician. I wish I could go to the club regularly, but it's far for me at night, when I'm tired, and mother's

always nervous, though Miss Belinda makes sure the girls get home safely. She and her sister, Miss Dorinda Allaire, live in a beautiful old house, up by the lake in Chagford proper; we call it 'the Stone House.' Miss Belinda takes the most pains with girls who haven't any mother. She ought to be especially interested in you, who have no one at all to look after you!"

"Sounds nice," commented Hazie.

The twins had been watching the subject of Lora's explanation with much interest as she stood talking to one of the girls across the room. She turned and came toward them with a smile that seemed to be directed straight to the double twins.

"I believe she does mean us!" exclaimed Daisy, not knowing that she spoke aloud, as Miss Allaire bore down upon them, still smiling, and holding out a hand.

She heard Daisy and said: "Surely I mean you, my dear! Will you welcome a new acquaintance? Lora will introduce us, though you have already been made known to me by Mr. Dermot; he has told me *all* your strange story."

Maizie slightly shook her head, and Miss Allaire gave her a glance that bade her not to fear disclosures.

"Lora told us who you were, too," Maizie said then.

"Which is the elder, which the younger pair of

twins? How wonderfully alike you four are!" cried Miss Belinda.

"I'll show you how to tell us," said Maizie. "Daisy's my twin; this is her. I'm Maizie. Daisy's eyes are grey if you look close; mine's blue. That one's Hazie; that one's Taizie, her twin. Taizie's got dark eyelashes, Hazie light. I guess you'd see other things, once you got on to us, but those are the starters for everybody."

"Thank you; I won't forget. I mean to know you so well that I shall learn all your little ways, which are usually the best guides to knowing people," said Miss Allaire. "Will you come to see me? And will you join my club? We have good times, the girls and I. I am a sort of mild spider that catches the flies who are alone, or haven't as happy homes as Lora here; I get them into my club for girls."

"So they won't be too fly?" asked Taizie, with a flash of the eye, yet half timidly, for she had seen fine ladies, like Miss Allaire, during her errand-girl days, and was a wee bit awestruck.

Miss Belinda's eyes laughed back at Taizie, and she answered quietly:

"At least we don't mean to harm our flies! Perhaps the club might wait for you until you see whether you are to stay on here — and how! In the meantime I wish you would let me bring a girl and a boy I know to see you. There is no child in all the world sweeter,

lovelier than this little girl friend of mine. She is somewhat younger than you in years and a great deal younger in fact, because she is an only child, tenderly sheltered from everything hard by her father and mother's love. You will know those dear people, too, and you will love them and my Nancy Porter just as I do — won't they, Lora?"

"They'd be queer if they didn't," said Lora with conviction. "Nancy's so dear everybody loves her to death. But Nancy Porter isn't nicer than her mother and the doctor!"

"She's Doctor Porter's little girl, our beloved Chagford physician's one child," Miss Belinda added, turning back to the twins. "The boy is Richard Lovering, a wonderful little violinist and a wonderfully fine lad, quite worthy to be like an adopted son to Doctor Porter and Nancy's almost-brother, which he is. May I bring these two to see you, my dears?"

"Why?" asked Maizie, with her own blunt honesty. "They sound like awful fine things: what'd they want with us?"

Lora looked frightened, but Miss Belinda laughed in a pleased way.

"They will like you, twin girls!" she said. "And I like your straight-out way of saying what you mean, Maizie! You see, I know which one you are already! I think, if you stay in Chagford, it may be most important that you know people who will be true, good

friends to you. I am a stranger to you, but you are not strangers to me. I had heard all about you before you came; I am here this morning expressly to see you — and I must not take another moment of your lunch hour! Will one of you — Maizie, perhaps? — walk with me to the elevator?"

As Maizie went away with Miss Allaire, a puzzled look on her face, the other three twins fell on Lora for an explanation, which she could not give.

"What makes her want us to know grand and elegant kids like those two?" demanded Hazie.

"I don't know," Lora said slowly. "She seemed to mean something. But Nancy Porter and Rick Lovering are perfect dears! And Doctor Porter and his wife are the very best people on earth! I'll tell you: Miss Allaire is from such an old family, and is such an elegant lady — and so nice — that everybody is only too glad to have her notice them. And Mrs. Porter's the kind that whatever she thinks just about settles things for everybody else. I don't know why Miss Belinda is so interested in you, but I do know you're in luck if she takes an interest in you and gets the Porters to."

"It must be because Peter —" began Taizie, but Daisy promptly stuffed a cracker into her mouth.

"'Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater' is a great game, Taizie, but it hasn't anything to do with this," Daisy said, with remarkable presence of mind, for the twins

were all anxious to keep the secret of Peter Debbs' relationship to them, and Taizie's slip nearly betrayed it. Lora looked more than ever puzzled. She did not believe that Taizie was going to say anything about the Peter that ate pumpkins, but she set this down to the Coggs queerness, which she began to think a very queer queerness indeed. In the meantime Miss Belinda, walking through to the elevator with Maizie, explained her desire to furnish acquaintances to the twins, which was puzzling Maizie as much as it puzzled her sisters.

"You mustn't mind my being a busybody, dear Maizie, since I'm a well-meaning busybody," she laughed. "You see, if you four funny young duplicates of one another should become suddenly immensely wealthy you would be preyed upon by all the least desirable people in the Chagfords — and everywhere else! Let me help you to make the right sort of friends; you will really be glad and thankful for it later on. It's a hobby of mine to look after young girls, when they'll let me. Please, Maizie?"

Miss Belinda leaned forward and peered into Maizie's face with such a pretty smile and air that warm-hearted Maizie was wholly won to her. Miss Belinda had attracted Maizie from the first glimpse of her.

"Gee, you don't suppose I don't like it! I guess I know it's awful good of you! I was just figuring

out what under the canopy you wanted to bother with us for!" cried Maizie sincerely.

"I'm going to be fond of you, you generous-hearted, honest, nice girls!" said Miss Belinda.

Then she went away, and Maizie slowly returned to her lunch, feeling that her world had changed beyond recognition within twenty-four hours.

The twins left the mill that night with Lora, but their ways parted at the door. The quartette turned towards Mrs. Deacon's, stopping on their way to lay in provisions for supper. It had suddenly turned warm and the twins were tired; solid fare did not appeal to them.

"If you'll all agree," said Taizie, halting in the entrance to the store, "we'll get a box of crackers, some cheese, and two lemons. That'll give us a half a lemon a-piece for lemonade and I'd heaps rather drink to-night than eat. Will you?"

"Yes, and I'm going to blow myself to a magazine, one of the long ones with fashion pitchers," announced Daisy. "Honest to goodness, I believe I could make a shirtwaist if I tried! Lora Bruce said she made hers. I'm going to spend fifteen cents for a 'Fashion Portrayal' — Lora said that's the best of 'em — and I'm going to study up on dressmaking."

"Well, for goodness' sake, what'll happen next!" cried Hazie.

"It would be a wise guy who could say," declared Maizie, so solemnly in spite of her slang, that it struck even her sisters as funny.

"You needn't laugh," Maizie added. "Things happen as if we was in a Happens factory, instead of the mills. Maybe Daise can do dressmaking, if she can have a awful rich old grandfather."

"We've all got him, or else none of us has, and we all couldn't make shirtwaists," said Hazie.

The light and insufficient supper, which Taizie had suggested, was eaten with Daisy's copy of the latest "Fashion Portrayal" propped against the cracker carton at the slight incline that its great length and weight allowed.

The lemonade glasses had been pushed toward the centre of the table as the girls leaned together to look at the magazine. Occasionally one or the other twin would raise her glass and tip it upside down over her nose once more, in the vain hope that another drop had leaked out from the lemon peel in the bottom.

"Oh, my sainted aunt, if here they ain't!" cried Taizie, in a sort of whispered scream, as she chanced to glance toward the window.

Miss Belinda Allaire was coming up the little walk to the house. Following her was a girl and a boy, while at the little gate stood a pair of heavy, altogether disproportioned horses, attached to a carriage

equally out of proportion to the small house before which it waited.

"Let 'em ring; it's sweller!" murmured Hazie, as Daisy started to get up. "To be sure, the door-bell's busted."

But Miss Allaire, who seemed to have great knowledge of the Coggs and their circumstances, knocked on a door which this room on the lower floor happened to have, that led directly to the yard, and immediately upon knocking opened the door and admitted herself and her comrades.

"I've brought my friends," announced Miss Belinda. "Nancy, Rick, these are the Coggs girls."

Nancy Porter plainly made a tremendous effort to be polite, but failed. She burst out laughing and laughed till she choked, and Rick Lovering laughed with her.

"You see, I told Nancy and Rick I was going to take them to see 'the Coggs,' and they made up their minds that it was another sort — cogs in machinery, you know. They were not prepared to find the '*cogs*' were girls," explained Miss Belinda, whose droll look when she introduced the double twins to Nancy and Rick had been responsible for their outburst.

"I'm so sorry," stammered Nancy, crimson over her own rudeness.

The double twins laughed almost as heartily as she and Rick had.

"Don't mind us," Maizie said. "First off we thought it was queer if we was so killing funny the minute you saw us, but I see the joke now."

The twins looked keenly at their younger visitors. Rick was a beautiful boy. His features were as regularly perfect as if they had been carved in marble to represent the young Apollo. His head was set on his shoulders with noble grace; his expression was frank and yet dreamy; his face full of sensitiveness, yet strong. He bore himself like a prince in a fairy tale, without a touch of self-consciousness.

The little girl, Nancy, was not precisely pretty, but she was better than that. Her face was flower-like in its delicacy of outline and expression. Her fine brown hair rolled smoothly back from a broad low brow, on which innocence and intelligence were written. Her greyish blue eyes were alight with the warmth of loving kindness and sparkling with the fire of imagination and humor. It was a sensitive, dear little face, one that no one could resist, and the gentle breeding of her home training spoke in every motion of the little maid's slight body and eager hands. The impetuous twins felt a strong desire on the instant to kiss Nancy's quivering, delicate lips, laughing at them and with them.

"Please tell Nancy and Rick about yourselves, Coggs girls?" said Miss Belinda. "I have not told them a syllable."

"We've been knocking around," said Daisy at loss how to begin. But the others joined with her, and in quartette they told the remarkable story of their lives, which they were just beginning to realize was remarkable, though they were getting tired of telling it.

They could not have had a better audience than Nancy and Rick. The whole visit had proved overwhelming to Nancy. Expecting to be shown cog wheels and finding twice-over twins was bad enough, but finding them such breezy, uneducated, jolly, entirely likable girls, so completely outside her previous experiences, and hearing from them a biography like a story book, rendered Nancy speechless when it ended.

As Miss Belinda had not told Nancy anything about the twins the doctor's little girl did not know what was expected of her on this strange visit.

She liked the Coggs girls, no one could help liking them, but there was no denying that they would not fit in well with Nancy's friends.

The shrewd twins saw that Nancy was in the dark as to what Miss Belinda hoped from her and they looked at her with fresh laughter in their eyes.

Rick's eyes twinkled back at them, and this settled Rick's standing to them.

Any one who could see things humorously was qualified for Coggs' liking.

"Will you come to see me soon?" Nancy asked, feeling her way. "We have good times at our house all the time, and my mother — you'd like my mother! Not better than my doctor-daddy, though!"

"You see, Nancy," Miss Belinda said, "these children will need the right sort of friends if they fall into all that money. It struck me that the Porters, big and little, would be the best friends they could have."

"Oh!" cried Nancy, swiftly understanding, and instantly foreseeing her lovely mother gently guiding these honest girls into correct ways of speech and manners, showing them how to be "the wealthy Misses Coggs."

"We'd hate to be tied down, though," said Taizie doubtfully. "We've been looking after ourselves pretty well."

"That's right!" Hazie confirmed her twin. "Why couldn't we just sail right in and have a good time? It's easy enough to be rich. Being poor's the tough thing! We'll have fun all the time, doing whatever we've a mind to, and that's not such a job! 'Course we like you, though," she added truthfully, to Nancy and Rick. "If we get rich and buy a autymobile car, with a show-for to run it, we'll take you out. We're going to take out most, though, the girls in the mills and people that ain't getting to go."

But Maizie Coggs had been watching their guests,

and, for the first time in her life, felt doubt of her own fitness to do what might await her doing.

She looked at Miss Belinda, the perfection of a gentlewoman, gracious, sweet-voiced, graceful; at Rick with his noble bearing and his marvellous ideal beauty, his manners, which made themselves felt though he hardly spoke, so easy, unconscious, yet polite — Maizie had never seen a boy like this! And Nancy, like a flower in her cool grey-blue gown and hat, seeming far younger than Taizie and Hazie, who were only a year her elders, a genuine little girl, and a shy one, yet with much of Miss Belinda's graciousness, the finest little revelation of girlhood Maizie had ever seen. Maizie was clever enough to see that here was something far removed from the rough-and-ready brightness of the twins, something that was better fitted to use great wealth than the Coggs twins were.

"Oh, I don't know, Taize and Haze; we're not such a much! We could stand getting a few points," Maizie said slowly. "I guess I'm kinder catching on. We might have fun in the car, but we wouldn't be the real thing. What's the good of having fun and being rich, if folks just simply holler about you behind your back? They'd be nice enough in front of us, trust 'em! That's what Miss Allaire means. I see! I'm sure I'm awful grateful to you for taking an interest in us," Maizie added with some feeling. "If

we get rich we'll stand and let you sandpaper us off. Gee, ain't it awful the things in this world! First off you think getting rich's the only thing, or else getting a good job, if you haven't any idea of being rich. Then, the minute you see a quarter or two rolling your way, you see you've got to brace up to spend it right. If you can make us more decent — more like that, you know — we'll stand for it!"

Maizie nodded at Nancy to point her remarks, precisely as if Nancy were unable to understand, and Rick doubled up with laughter at her frankness and Nancy's blushes.

"Bravo, Maizie!" cried Miss Allaire. "You'll see more and more what you are catching a glimpse of to-night. You are a dear girl; you are all dear girls, but that goes without saying if one is, since you are as alike as daisies in a field! I can see that Nancy and Rick think you are the right sort of girls, too, so I hope we shall all be friends."

"Maybe we'll look kinder funny being friends with 'em," said Daisy, "but we're it, if you'll have us. They're all silk, I guess, fast color."

Miss Belinda bore her Nancy and Rick away. The Coggs watched them into the carriage and nodded their brilliant and fly-away locks at them as they drove off, waving their hands hard in response to Nancy and Rick, who waved at them out of the carriage windows. Then the double twins turned and walked back into

their room and sat down and looked at one another in silence.

"Say, ain't it awful, Mabel!" said Taizie at last.

"Why?" demanded Daisy.

"They're so fine. If being rich's going to make me have to try to be like that I'll feel like a wheelbarrow trying to be a airship," groaned Taizie.

"Pshaw! You won't have to do it all at once," said Maizie. "Besides, we sha'n't never try to be up to that. What we've got to do is to polish up a little and tone down a lot. That little Nancy wouldn't say 'ain't it awful, Mabel,' Taizie. Not by a jugful!"

"Nor that either, Maize!" cried Hazie. And they all laughed.

"That's what I mean; we've got to cut it all out and pick up the right thing," persisted Maizie. "I guess we can, too! We've picked up the slang, just hearing it, so we can pick up other lingo and nice ways dead easy. We'll like it; they'll give it to us easy. Ain't they great?"

"They sure are!" Daisy agreed. "But that Miss Allaire brought them just to show us; just like they was kinder catechisms and we was heathens."

"Well, heathens learn 'em, they say, and get to be just like folks; so'll we," said Maizie. "I don't mind 's long's catechisms come so nice. If you're a heathen, why the only thing to do's to be a sensible heathen and take what's sent you to get you to be a Christian, in

the right clothes. I'm just crazy about that little Nancy!"

"We all are," said Daisy wearily, "but I'm tearing hungry. Crackers and lemonade don't stay by a body, and society's awful hungry work."

Maizie looked at her twin and laughed; she saw that Daisy was a little castdown by the complications which coming wealth seemed to threaten, that none of the other twins saw as clearly as she did that these new acquaintances were the best of all their recent forms of good luck.

"You poor kid!" she said, carrying out her obligations as the recognized head of the family and administrator of its funds. "It's early yet. We'll go down to the drug store and have a sundae a-piece, chocolate syrup, and they serve crackers. Lora told me the best place for 'em. I'll stand for it; if we are Peter Debbs' grandchildren we can afford a sundae each, and if we ain't, then we'll need it to make up for the disappointment."

CHAPTER IV

THE COGGS SLIP INTO PLACE

"WILL the Misses Coggs please come this way?" said Mr. Dermot, standing in the doorway of the room in which the two sets of twins worked. "Will the other girls please close up and continue their work? Finish the work which the Coggs girls were doing, if you please. They are not returning this afternoon."

"Oh, my land, Peter Debbs is going to be a grandfather!" cried Taizie.

And the four Coggs girls hastily departed, their faces crimson, their eyes snapping with excitement. They left their comrades a generous share in this excitement. Combined with Taizie's mysterious ejaculation, it caused a thrill in the room and awoke a strong conviction that, as the Coggs twins would have said, "there was something doing."

Mr. Dermot stood aside and let them precede him into the corridor, then he followed.

"Mr. Carberry is here, my dears," he said. "Will you come into my office to see him?"

"Wherever you say," murmured Maizie, hardly conscious of what she was doing.

It might be that Mr. Carberry had come to settle the legal side of Mr. Debbs' acknowledgment of his grandchildren. It might be that he had come to tell the twins that there never was to be such an acknowledgment, that Mr. Debbs had decided that they were not his daughter's children, that they were to go on for ever, poor and struggling, and Mr. Carberry would be "obliged to trouble them to repay what they had borrowed from him."

Maizie realized how hard it would be thus to have their hopes dashed to the ground, how much harder it would be now to be poor than before they had seen their dreams of abundance and gay good times likely to be fulfilled.

And, because it seemed as though she could hardly bear it, Maizie felt sure that she was to be called upon to bear it, that this was what Mr. Carberry had to tell them.

Mr. Carberry was in the office, being entertained by Tommy Giddings, when the twins arrived under Mr. Dermot's escort. He was laughing at something Tommy had just said, and he arose to greet the four girls with the laugh still in his eyes and on his lips. But Maizie reminded herself this showed nothing, except that it did not matter to Mr. Carberry which way the question had been solved; *he* was not expecting to

be acknowledged as a granddaughter by Peter Debbs!

"Well, you wonderful twofold twins," Mr. Carberry greeted them, "How do you like the Chagford towns and working in your grandfather's mills?"

Maizie caught her breath, four right hands clutched at a girl, as the four twins heard the implication in Mr. Carberry's words that these mills *were* their grandfather's, or, rather, that their owner was their grandfather.

"All right," said Maizie breathlessly. "Are we?"

"Are you what?" asked Mr. Carberry. "Working in your grandfather's mills? Certainly. Or you were until you were called to see me. I doubt your working here longer. Mr. Debbs has admitted all I claimed for you. You are the children of his only child, Mary Margaret Debbs, wife of William Coggs. The proof I laid before the old man can't be disputed. Mr. Debbs has written me to say that he admits it and is ready to do his duty by you. He does not care to see you. I think this is not precisely from unkind feeling, but from a strong objection to being disturbed in his very settled habits."

Mr. Carberry had gone on saying more than he had set out to say in stating the fact of his triumph, because he saw that the four young heirs of old Peter

Debbs were considerably shaken by his news. The color had gone out of their faces, leaving them white, with the freckles on their cheerful noses conspicuous. Their eyes dilated, their lips parted; Mr. Carberry could see that Hazie and Daisy were trembling. But this phase of their emotion was quickly over. Rallying they took hands, as if by a common impulse, spread out in line and crowed triumphantly in quartette, precisely like a pen of prize cockerels.

"Oh, gee!" the four sighed rapturously after this performance. "Oh, gee! What comes next?"

"It ought to be a fricassee," laughed Mr. Carberry. "Do you mean what arrangement has your grandfather made for you? None whatever." Then, seeing the blank disappointment on the twins' faces, he supplemented this statement hastily.

"I mean that he has not taken any steps to control you, or to arrange for your future, beyond providing for you," he said. "I did my best to get him to appoint a guardian for you, or to take charge of you himself, but he was determined not to interfere with you. It did no good for me to remind him that the younger pair of you were but fourteen years old and the elder hardly more. He says that if you have got on without any one to look after you poor, you may try it rich. He said that he should like to see how much sense you have. It is rather a cruel test, but I venture to hope you may triumph over it."

"I'll bet it takes more sense to spend money than it does to go without it," said Maizie. "You see, girls, it's lucky we know Miss Allaire and those Porter kids! Go on, Mr. Carberry — please."

"Mr. Debbs means to give you a yearly allowance of twenty-five thousand dollars; it is the interest on half a million. Out of that you must provide for yourselves entirely, buy whatever you want, whether it is clothes, houses, automobiles, anything. But he decides to consider that your income began six months ago and to allow you half of one year's income to start on, in case you want to make a home for yourselves. So twelve thousand five hundred dollars are deposited for you to draw against as a capital to begin on, and your regular income for this quarter, six thousand two hundred and fifty dollars, is also deposited for you to live on for the coming three months. I am instructed to make you understand that your income will be paid quarterly, in advance, and that you must arrange to live within it, paying all bills as they fall due."

It is more than doubtful if Mr. Carberry carried out his instructions to make the twins understand what they were to do, how they were to use this income. From the first overwhelming statement that they — *they,* the Coggs twins, poor, untaught, unrelated little they — were to have an income of twenty-five thousand dollars a year they had all four gone

off into a sort of waking swoon, floating off on a high tide of figures.

Taizie returned to consciousness first of the double twins; she looked at Mr. Carberry as if her eyes had never before rested upon a specimen of his race.

"Did you say twenty-five thousand dollars? Every single year? To spend?" she cried.

Mr. Carberry nodded his laughing assent, without speaking.

"When we used to talk about being rich maybe we might of got up to a hundred dollars every month to spend, but — Ain't it two thousand? Twice twelve's twenty-four?" gasped Daisy.

"Two thousand eighty-three dollars and, about, thirty-four cents a month, to be exact." Mr. Carberry's laugh rang out; he was enjoying this scene greatly, as were Mr. Dermot and Tommy.

"I guess it is funny," said Daisy soberly, "but that thirty-four cents would have been worth talking about in New York. We didn't get near the eighty-four dollars."

Maizie roused with a jerk; she turned so dark a red that she looked apoplectic.

"Who'll I tell?" she cried. "I've got to go tell some one! I'll never believe it 'less I tell some one! Oh, talk about luck and getting rich! We never meant it like this!"

"Go tell Aunt Elona; she'll be surprised enough,"

suggested Tommy. "I suppose she and I won't dare talk to you after to-day."

"Get out, Tommy Giddings! What'd make us turn silly when we most need our sense?" demanded Maizie. "Say, we do go tell Mrs. Deacon, girls? We can't tell Lora till the bell rings to quit. Let's go up and tell Miss Allaire. Where does she live?"

"Shall we discuss where you are to live? Shall we try to arrange your future?" suggested Mr. Carberry.

"Oh, not yet!" Maizie and Daisy exclaimed together. "It's too new. We're good and comfortable where we are stopping. I'll tell you: We'll go up to see Miss Allaire. She's a good one, and, besides, I like her. We'll get some tips from her. Then can't we have kinder a blow out to-night? Tommy, get Lora when she comes out and bring her along and have a nice supper — something real dandy, like a steak, maybe, and some canned baked beans, a good kind, and maybe some of those potato chips you get ready made, and some baker's cake. We couldn't have ice-cream, could we? And nobody say a word to Mrs. Deacon, or Lora, till supper, and then spring it on 'em!"

Maizie made the suggestions for this banquet with some hesitation, but fortified herself as she went on by remembering that they could now afford even this lavish magnificence.

"That's it, Maizie!" Taizie approved her. "We'll

celebrate. What's the matter with bottled soft drinks, like birch beer?"

"Or saucy p'rilla," added Hazie, speaking for the first time since the family glory had blinded her.

"That's a go!" said Daisy. "If we don't have to work this afternoon we'd better go see Miss Allaire. Didn't you say we could be let off, Mr. Dermot?"

"Do you mean that you still consider yourselves mill hands?" laughed Mr. Dermot. "You will not work for me another day, will you?"

"Gee, that's right!" cried Daisy once more overwhelmed. "We — why, we won't ever have to go to work again, will we?"

"With twenty-five thousand a year? I guess not exactly! We won't know how to stay home, though," said Maizie.

"Well, you watch me!" said Taizie significantly. "If we're going up to Miss Allaire's let's mosey along. I guess we'd better go; she'll be the best one."

"Yes, she knows, and she's good," added Hazie. "I'm scared."

"It's a long distance from here to Miss Allaire's," said Mr. Dermot. "Tommy had better call a carriage for you."

"Oh, my aunt! A carriage for the Coggs twins!" murmured Taizie faintly. "All right; call it, Tommy. Maybe it'll come when you call it; it wouldn't for me. I'm too weak to make it hear."

Tommy doubled up over this speech, but he easily made the carriage — or the stable — hear over the telephone, and it was not long before the first carriage that the twins had ever summoned, or ridden in on their own responsibility, stopped at the mill door.

"Haven't we got to talk to you, Mr. Carberry, about things? And — what made me forget! — I've got to return what you lent us to get here," said Maizie pausing at the carriage step.

"Oh, I shall be here three or four days, till everything is settled. Go on your visit, Miss Maizie; my business will wait," said Mr. Carberry, handing her into the carriage and holding her serge skirt away from the wheel "as though it had been velvet," Maizie thought.

"It will be, too!" she declared aloud as she settled herself and they started.

"Will be what? What will be?" asked Daisy.

"My skirt, velvet," answered Maizie. "I'm going to wear velvet all the time when I haven't got on satin and silk and lace — and stuff!"

"We all will," Daisy said emphatically. "The very first thing I want's a plum-colored velvet dress, with a gold trimming, like that girl at Keith's had one night."

"It's getting too hot to buy that first," said Hazie. "I guess I'll get some kinder blue lace over a satin, yellow, maybe, for summer."

"And a diamond!" cried Taizie ecstatically. "Say, girls, what d'you s'pose a real diamond'd cost, set up awful high and so't would show?"

"Not so much; you could have it; we'll all have one," said Maizie in a rapture.

All the long drive from Chagford Falls to Chagford proper, and then up past the lake, where stood the stone house which was the Misses Allaire's dignified old Colonial home, these blissful double twins kept lengthening their list of what they were to have, as one desirable thing after another occurred to them. The list varied constantly, but a few things held their own as permanent desires. These were the gorgeous clothing, the diamond rings, an automobile and a truly splendid house, which they began to realize they might actually buy and own; not rent, but *own!*

"Maybe we could buy a house for the money Mr. Carberry said we had to start us, the money for the last six months that grand— Mr. Debbs handed over. And then maybe we could sort of scrape along on the six thousand we've got for the next three months," said Daisy solemnly.

The four twins fairly rolled on the seats, tumbling over on their sides laughing at the exquisite joke of their being barely able to exist for three months on this sum. "And five hundred, besides!" added Taizie, breathless.

"But I'll tell you one thing," said Maizie, with

sudden prudence. "We don't know any more than one of the littlest kewpie dolls what it'll cost to keep house and pay folks. We've got to be careful till we find out. It's pretty lucky we know Miss Allaire, and that doctor and his wife are going to give us a tip or two, because we might spill ourselves out, going too fast, and I'll bet Mr. Debbs wouldn't stand for it. Didn't you hear Mr. Carberry say he wanted to see what sense we had? We've got to show him. We'd have enough fun to kill us if we just set around at first and had all the ice-cream we want, and planned it out."

"It wouldn't of hurt him to have seen us," said Taizie, and the other three knew that she meant their grandfather.

"No, it wouldn't," said Daisy. "But it won't hurt us not to," she added proudly.

"This is a awful pretty drive," remarked Hazie.

It was. The road ran along the lake, bordered by noble trees of more than a century's growth, and the scattered houses on the way sat back amid parklike grounds, with beautiful gardens just getting into perfection, and with paths that wound under shade trees, down to orchards which were only a week or two past their bloom. Among these houses was one that impressed the Coggs twins as the most magnificent private residence they had ever seen. Its situation was really most beautiful, but the house was like a

particularly expensive nightmare, caused by a supper of all the viands that stand for extravagance. It was yellowish brick, with turrets and towers, pointed and rounding; windows of every sort of architecture, put into every unlikely place, and the trimmings were stone, with absurd rounded shingles under the eaves.

There was a sign on the big gateposts that guarded the entrance stating that this marvellous house was "For Sale."

The twins read it and caught at one another, moved by the same thought.

"Whose house is that?" asked Maizie in a tone that she carefully made careless.

The driver turned to her, not in the least misled. Not for nothing had he heard the conversation that had filled him with amazement all the way here. His sharp Yankee wits were perfectly capable of putting two and two together.

"That," he said significantly, "is a great bargain. A man named Foster built that house and then failed up, so's't he never lived in it, not more'n a few months. It must have cost him thousands of dollars, maybe fifty. It'll be bought now for ten or so. Nobody comes along wantin' to invest in it. Some folks who can put so much as ten thousand or so in a house say it's got more styles of architecture in it than they're looking to get in one purchase. So it goes. I guess I'd ought to say so it don't go! That house's called

round the Chagfords 'Foster's Folly,' because Mr. Foster didn't have the wherewithal to back up its building — and other reasons. But it's a great bargain, and somebody with ready cash's going to get the benefit of it."

The twins exchanged hand pressures; the hands were cold. The thought that this palace might be theirs was almost unbearably glorious.

"And it's got some furniture in it; quite considerable," added their driver.

Miss Belinda Allaire received her callers cordially and presented them to her elder sister, Miss Dorinda, who was slender and aristocratic-looking like the younger Miss Allaire, but was less attractive to the girls. They soon discovered that she was just as ready to be their friend, however. She heard their great news with no less excitement than her sister betrayed, and showed just as much interest in their half-formed plans.

"It's wonderful, perfectly wonderful!" declared Miss Belinda. "I should think you'd be wildly excited, you double doublets! It's the strangest story! And really a great deal of money! Oh, my dears, do go slow and don't make mistakes! Or at least not too many, and no serious ones!"

"We don't want to," said Maizie earnestly. "We hurried right up here 'cause we didn't. We're beginning to see it's a bigger job than we thought.

We're going to the city — to Boston — to buy some good clothes. And we thought — do you think? — we want a house of our own, Miss Allaire. Do you think that lovely big yellowish one near here that's for sale would be too grand for us? The man that drove us up here said it was a bargain."

Maizie looked at her appealingly, and the six equally eager eyes of her sisters looked just as longingly at Miss Belinda for a favorable verdict.

Miss Belinda hesitated. "It is not good, my dears. It is no sort of architecture; every conceivable style is piled upon it; it looks like a child's box of building blocks, set up as a child might put them together. That is why no one has bought it. But the grounds are fine, the situation perfect. It could be altered, if one chose, later on, when its owner saw what it needed. And it is a bargain, except that it is ugly. Perhaps — yes, I think it might answer for you," said Miss Belinda.

Her comments on the ugliness of the house rolled over the twins' four tawny heads without making the slightest impression upon their minds. They did not think it ugly; they thought it most magnificent. Ugliness, from an artistic standpoint, did not enter yet into their knowledge. All that they really heard Miss Belinda say was that it was a bargain, that the grounds and situation were fine, and that they might have it. This settled the question. When the twins

took their leave it was with their minds made up to their future residence and their hearts fairly thumping when they tried fully to take in the stupendous fact that such a house might be their very own.

With a warm look of liking and sympathy in their eyes the Misses Allaire watched the twins drive away. The twins were so simple, so happy, so interesting and so generous!

"Lora Bruce helped us a lot to start into work," Daisy had said as they went away. "We're going to give her a good time now."

"We're going to give her more'n a good time," Maizie had added. "We're going to try to give her a great deal more'n a good time, if only she won't be proud and will take it. And Mrs. Deacon's been real good to us; we want to show we know it. We've got to figure up what we've got to spend and not go ahead buying everything we want, so we won't have enough for other folks."

"Yes," agreed Hazie. "We've had it hard ourselves, so we've got to kinder grease other folks's wheels."

It was these parting speeches that made the Misses Allaire watch the twins out of sight with the warm look that revealed the regard these big-hearted girls were winning from them.

The twins found Mrs. Deacon sorely puzzled, and a little annoyed, on their return. Tommy had or-

dered a ready-made supper, as far as was possible following the twins' suggestions, but he had brought Lora to his aunt's with him, and unexpected company, as well as unexpected festivities, as Mrs. Deacon said, "put her about dreadful."

However, Mrs. Deacon was not a cross woman, and when Lora and Tommy flew around, helping get the supper ready before the double twins came back, her annoyance flew after them. She grew cheerful, catching the hints in Tommy's frequent allusions that something was about to happen, and in his manner, which was a compound of Sherlock Holmes and a trumpeter, of one filled both with mystery and triumph.

When the twins came in they came with a rush, looking so joyous that Lora exclaimed, and Mrs. Deacon performed a remarkable sleight-of-hand trick with a dish that she nearly dropped, but caught on the instant.

They jumped at Lora and swung her around, all four of them in a jubilant mix-up, but they shook their heads at Tommy, warning him not to betray them.

"We're going to slick up a little, then we'll be ready," said Daisy, and they all four rushed away for the operation.

"We haven't anything to dress up in — yet!" said Taizie significantly, returning in advance of the others. "My, but that supper looks good!"

"It's all ready, but it's curious your havin' it here, when you don't so much as board with me," Mrs. Deacon permitted herself to say. "But, there! It's ready, as I said, so do let's sit down and eat it hot. I guess you've got something on the go. Tommy Giddings's bristling with points he'd love to use, for all the world like a paper o' pins."

"Maizie sits at the foot, opposite you, Mrs. Deacon, 'cause she's the head of the Coggses, but the rest don't matter," announced Daisy.

They took their places at the table according to this decision, and, for a time, they were all so busy that conversation suffered. But after the steak had disappeared, the baked beans diminished, the Saratoga chips gone snappingly to their end, including those errant ones which had flown out of the dish when a spoon was inserted and had to be captured and eaten with fingers, when the supper was nearly over, Tommy leaned back in his chair and said feelingly:

"How long are you girls going to keep this up? I'm bursting with supper, and it isn't fair to keep me bursting with news, too. Tell, one of you!"

Thus adjured, the twins saw that the time had come for their great announcement.

"Which'll tell? Let's do it together," cried Taizie.

So, all together, the double twins shouted their news. But the result was not as impressive as it

would have been if there had been a previous agreement on what was to be said.

One shouted: "We're rich!" Another: "We're Peter Debbs' grandchildren!" A third: "We've got twenty-five thousand dollars to spend every year!" While Hazie's words in the quartette were: "We're wealthy ladies and we're going to buy that big house up by Miss Allaire's and a autymobile!"

In spite of the fact that all four said different things, and no two came out at the end of their sentences at the same time, the sense of all four was clear, and the words which lapped over at the end of the longer sentences were unmistakable. The effect on the audience of two was all that one could have hoped. Lora fell back in her chair and stared open-mouthed, quite pale from the shock.

Mrs. Deacon upset the cream jug, which sent a stream of cream directly on the head of Araminta, the cat, who was sitting close to her mistress, hopefully, and who doubtless regarded the cream as a generous, though misdirected contribution to her welfare.

Mrs. Deacon threw up both hands — which explained the cream jug — and gasped.

"For — the — land's — sake!" she exclaimed slowly. Then she added: "Well, I want to know! Are you — you ain't old Peter Debbs' grandchildren, and you ain't really tellin' us you're awful rich?"

"That's what!" cried Maizie jubilantly. "We

can't stay here with you, because we're going to buy that big yellowish house over beside the lake — Foster's, I guess."

"Foster's Folly! Cracky!" cried Tommy.

"But we're going to keep our room here and do something, if you let us. I guess we'll fix it up with newspapers and things for a reading-room, for the mills. How'd that do? And we're going to Boston the first day we can get there and buy clothes. We need some one to go along to show us the way and what to buy. Will you go?" Maizie poured out her words like a flood.

"I'd admire to!" said Mrs. Deacon, a faint color creeping into her sallow pallor. "I've never seen nice clothes in stores, hardly. When I was where they were I never looked at 'em, because what was the use? I always thought just to go and buy once, like opening a sluice in a dam, would be something that would make me feel I was about ready to say I'd lived! I haven't been to Boston in dear knows when! I'd admire to go with you, buyin' in, though I'm bound to tell you that more'n likely some one with more experience — like the Allaires, or Mrs. Porter — 'd advise you better."

"No, indeed! It would be lovely to have you, if you haven't seen many nice clothes. We haven't either, for when Taizie and Hazie ran errands for the dressmaker's place the clothes were always tied up in

the boxes. We'd like to have you help us pick out, if you haven't seen many," said Daisy earnestly, without the least idea that this might be funny.

"You're going to have fun out of it, Lora," said Taizie. "You look all in! Ain't you glad it's all come out so comical?"

"'Course I'm glad!" said Lora. "But I never was so surprised! I'm having fun now, as far as that goes, and I have had ever since you came."

"My goodness, I don't mean fun like thinking four of a kind was funny!" cried Taizie. "I mean good times. You've been good to us; it's our turn. And Tommy's been awful decent, too; I guess we'll show him something!"

"It's real solemn with it's bein' so fine," said Mrs. Deacon. "It's natural you young folks should think only of the good times it'll give you. But it's solemn, and you'd ought to be very good and grateful. Seem's if we ought to have a hymn on the melodeon; Lora, you play one."

"Can you play, Lora?" asked Hazie, impressed.

"I can play one hymn and some little easy tunes," said Lora rising. "I took a few lessons by correspondence, got 'em getting subscriptions to a farm paper."

She seated herself at the melodeon and pulled out four stops with an air of competence that awed the generous twins.

Then she played the one hymn that she knew. It proved to be " Rescue the Perishing." At first it did not seem precisely suitable as a hymn of thanksgiving, but when one considered from what friendlessness and utter poverty the double twins had been rescued, perhaps it was not so unfitting.

In any case, the Coggs girls admired it heartily, and it lifted the occasion from one of merely worldly rejoicing to a gravity that befitted the responsibilities of immense wealth.

CHAPTER V

THE QUARTETTE SINGS "HOME, SWEET HOME"

"IT doesn't take any longer to buy a house than it does to get potato salad and frankförters in a delly cattessen store!" said Taizie, amazed to discover this. "We didn't always know whether we wanted potato salad and frankförters, or something else, when we went in, but we knew we wanted this house the minute we saw it, so we didn't waste time looking along the counter. Besides, we didn't have so much money to spend for frankförters as we did for a house, according to the size of the two, and that makes a difference. We use' to want to make it reach 's far 's 'twould," said Daisy. "Well, anyhow, we've got the house and we've got all the papers signed and we've seen Mr. Carberry off and we're on our own hook and, my gracious, don't it feel funny!"

"I don't think it feels at all, not like it really is," said Hazie. "It's awful not to take it in, but I can't! I feel all in under it, just like I had a big thing upside down on my head, like a washtub."

"Gracious!" cried Maizie. "But I know what you mean; I can't make it seem so either. Maybe when we go down to Boston, and buy a whole lot of perfectly magnificent clothes, we'll wake up. You know how kinder good you feel when you've got new shoes. We'd ought to feel our oats when we're dressed in silks and satins."

"Indeed I don't feel good when I've got new shoes!" cried Taizie. "But I guess we'll take in what's happened, once we get our new clothes and go to living in our house."

"Oh, for the love of Mike!" cried Daisy, with a sob in her throat that made her exclamation sound like anything rather than slang. "Doesn't that sound like 'Home, Sweet Home' by a chorus and a brass band?"

The four girls went to Boston by the earliest train on the second day after the big yellow house beside the lake had been bought, their title to their property recorded, the mystery of check-writing taught them, and Mr. Dermot entrusted with their guidance until another could be found for the office. He was not willing to act as the twins' guardian, being superintendent of Mr. Debbs' mills. Mr. Carberry had departed for New York. Mrs. Deacon accompanied the girls to Boston, selected for the funny reason that she had no experience in fine raiment such as the double twins were seeking. Of course the kind girls'

real reason for taking her was that she had so little pleasure.

She looked more tired and shabby on the train than she did at home. Maizie and Daisy, sitting opposite to her and Taizie, while Hazie behaved in a dignified manner alone at a little distance from them, made a mental memorandum of what was to be bought for their landlady.

The double twins returned after three days in Boston, which must have been days full to over-flowing with business and pleasure. They returned with a trunk a-piece, filled with the results of their shopping, and boxes following them by express. They reported to Mr. Dermot the purchase of the car, its make having been decided upon before they started. It was to be brought up to Chagford by a man from the warerooms, testing it thoroughly on its trip. The twins were to find their chauffeur at home; they all called him a "show-for," evidently with an association of ideas that a car and its driver were striking belongings for the Coggs girls to boast.

Mrs. Deacon came home transformed, but within bounds. She had prevented the girls from buying her half that they would have liked to give her, and the half she accepted she kept within the limits of what she considered suitable to a woman of her age and circumstances.

But she came back with one desire of her heart

gratified. She now possessed a good black silk gown, which she had been brought up to believe was the last utterance of elegant respectability, "suitable for any occasion."

"And if I should die," she said solemnly, "I'd have a good dress to bury me in, and that's what I've always felt bad that I didn't have."

"Great Scott, Mrs. Deacon!" cried Taizie. "We'd a million times liever buy you something giddy to dance in!"

But though this speech sent the other three Coggs off into joyous laughter, Mrs. Deacon would not smile.

"I'm just as certain never to dance as I am to die; the black silk's better," she said. The girls never could tell whether Mrs. Deacon saw a joke or not.

The day after their return the double twins took possession of their new house. There was considerable furniture in it, left by its unlucky builder when his crash of fortune came. It was furniture all gilt and tapestry covers and carvings. The twins regarded it with admiration, not to say awe, and, if it was not in good taste, no one could deny that it must have been an expensive purchase originally. The moving in was not a difficult performance. The trunks from Boston held almost all the double twins' worldly goods.

Mr. Carberry had insisted upon a promise from the

girls that they would get a reliable woman to live with them, one who would, at the same time, cook for them and be a guardian, pending more servants and the setting up of an organized household.

"How under the canopy shall we know how to treat her!" cried Taizie. "Think of us with somebody working for us! I'll never in this world get on to treating her any way at all. I'll be scared stiff for fear she'll think I'm asking too much of her, or not asking as much as I'd ought, as long's we're paying her. Oh, my goodness gracious, ain't it fierce learning!"

Maizie threw up her hands as she laughed, a trick of hers.

"And Mr. Carberry said she had to be pretty well along in years, and I've heard you had to call people working for you by their first names. Won't you feel like a baked apple calling an old woman Lizzie, or whatever it is?" she asked.

"No. A baked apple ain't fresh, and we'll feel fresher'n the freshest air fund doing that," said Daisy.

"Well, where'll we get her to call her anything?" inquired Hazie.

This seemed a poser, but Hazie herself answered her own question.

Going out to order a dray to take their possessions from Mrs. Deacon's to the new house, Hazie came

upon a colored woman balancing a basket of clothes upon her head. The basket was so large and the woman balanced it so skilfully, that Hazie was fascinated. She carefully stepped aside to avoid a collision, and the woman smiled on her with ample lips and gleaming teeth, eloquent of good temper.

"I won't drop it, honey," she said. "You could bump into me like a batter lamb and I wouldn't drop it," she said.

Although Hazie did not know that the woman meant a battering ram, there was something about the idea of a batter lamb bumping into any one that struck her fancy.

"Do you live anywhere?" she asked, laughing, and struck by a sudden inspiration, as well as by the colored woman's simile.

"Lawsy-me, do I look like a happytant of just nowheres?" inquired the woman, spreading her already vast bulk. "'Course I lives, Missy. Where'd I done this washin' I'm fetchin' home yere if I didn't have a place for it?"

"Well, I mean — Come and see my sisters, unless you think you'd rather be where you're now than anywhere else," Hazie said. "We're looking for some one who can cook and live with us. I like you; you look good and funny."

"For de good land's sake!" exclaimed the woman. "Either you're plumb crazy, or else you're one of dat

double set o' twins the whole place's talkin' about, old Pete' Debbses' grandchillun!"

"Maybe we are crazy, but we're the twins all right," said Hazie.

"No, you ain't crazy, if you're them, but 'twould be crazy if any other lil' girl just kind o' stopped a wash-lady, promiscuous, an' asked her would she come live with 'em. You all's huntin' round, as you may say. Now, I'll jes' tell you, honey, I ain't so satisfactionary to myself as I might be. I ain't got too much luck, an' dat's right! I'm lame. If you was to watch me you'd see I kind o' jes' gets along with one laig go-draggy like. I'm a self-respectubble colored lady, what anybody'll speak up fer you ask 'bout me. But you don't want such a big lady that's lame workin' for you!"

"Yes, we do; we do want you!" cried Hazie, convinced on the instant that they did. "The house's big enough to put a steam roller at work in every room. And if you're lame we sure do want you, 'cause we're going to try to give people part of our luck, if they haven't much of their own. If you ain't getting on so very good it shows you ought to come. We're going in for great times, up there in our grand house. You'll like it, and Maizie and Taizie and Daisy are great. Can you cook? What'd we call you?"

Hazie suddenly remembered that would-be employers should question applicants.

"My lawsy, massy me, can I cook? Can I *cook!* Well, chile, I ain't boastin', but I can come pretty near to beatin' the Demonico, who, I take it, is another name for the Wicked One, at cookin'. If I wasn't lame I could draw wages, I kin tell you! My name's Cleopatra Samaria Cantata Jinks. My maw give me plenty; she say names don't cost nothin', an' they's stylish. Cleopatra's some kind o' antique name. Samaria's a Bible name; so's Cantata. My maw use' to say they done sing about Cantata — some kin to Queen Esther she was — the day 'fore I was born, an' she heard 'em, so she name' me that along with the rest. I likes Cleo myself, for short; folks I work for previous before now use' call me Cantata; that name sort o' please 'em. You kin call me jes' what you like out of 'em; I lay my names on the table, like you might say, an' you picks out which ever you like bes', same's tellin' fortunes with cards, you might pick out ace o' hearts for you' wish card."

Cleopatra Samaria Cantata Jinks came to see the remaining three of the four twins and, coming, conquered. They were instantly determined to take her when they saw that her lameness did compel her to extreme slowness of motion, which, combined with her elephantine size, would make her undesirable. These girls were so full of good intentions that it seemed to them their duty to give everybody who had any handicap a chance. When one considers, this

was a beautiful way of remembering their own past hard times and proving gratitude for their betterment.

But no sooner had they decided upon Cleopatra Samaria Cantata out of pity, than their virtue began to include its own reward, for they found her a character, a deep well of fun, and rejoiced in her for their own sakes.

The first day in the new house was wonderful to the twins. There never can be more than one first day of all in anything. After it, though the joy may continue, there is a gradual adjustment to the novelty, but that first day is the day of miracle; it brings its own delight, and the anticipation of all the days and years to follow it. The girls arose early. Each twin had her own bedroom and expanded in it, remembering the one crowded room of the New York tenement, the bedroom of all four, the living-room and kitchen as well.

Maizie lay a while after waking and looked about her, at the high ceiling, the damask paper, the long windows, the fluttering lace curtains, for the windows were open in the heat of a warm May. She looked at the brass sconces with their china candles for gas, which seemed to her the perfection of ingenuity and beauty; at the cheval glass, the carved dressing-table, the roses in her velvet carpet, and her heart overflowed.

"Oh, Lord," she said under her breath, "I will be

a good girl, I'll honest try to be a good girl and divvy up with people down on their luck! And I'll try to learn to talk right and act right to match it all."

It was a queer little prayerful promise, but there is no doubt that God would overlook the word "divvy" when it expressed a gratitude which too many fortunate ones quite forget to feel.

The forenoon was spent hanging the new gowns in the spacious wardrobes of the dressing-rooms that opened out of each great chamber, and laying the other new garments in the drawers which they could not begin to fill.

Cleopatra Samaria Cantata, whose name Maizie had contracted into C. S. C., hence Ceescy, came up to help with her admiration. This was a real help, for every one knows that new clothes need an admiring audience quite as much as a new play does.

"They're awful magnificent," said Ceescy, rolling her eyes, her arms akimbo. "I don't know's I hardly ever see such magnificence. I shouldn't think that Queen Sheba had such clothes when she was young like you."

Cleopatra Samaria Cantata was justified in this opinion. The double twins had gratified their longing to express their youth, set free from poverty, and had blossomed out in more colors than spring puts on after the bleak winter.

"They're pretty nifty," admitted Taizie, surveying

her own particular lot with the frankest pleasure. "This is only some; we'll have a lot."

When the new gowns were hung in their places the interior of the wardrobes looked like a Japanese street in a festival. Colors as many and as brilliant as rows of Japanese paper lanterns fell together from successive hooks, the shimmer of silks against the deep folds of velvet, the foam of laces dropping into the glisten of satins.

The double twins went by twos, arms around each other, from room to room, from wardrobe to wardrobe, speechless with the delight of what they saw.

At the last wardrobe they stood longest, because it was the last.

No one spoke. Each girl rapturously pressed her linked mate, or pinched her gently to prove the reality of their seeing.

At last Taizie spoke, a low utterance, barely above a whisper.

"Oh, gee!" she said. "Oh, gee, oh, gee!"

Ceescy called the twins to luncheon. She had proved her powers as a cook.

If Delmonico, whom Ceescy called Demonico, attributing to him the skill of a demon, could surpass her, she was quite clever enough to keep any one from wishing for him.

The big colored woman had served a luncheon to the four girls so good that it half frightened them to

regard it as their own luncheon. It was embarrassing to be served by Ceescy, who, pending the finding of servants for the big establishment, acted both as cook and waitress. The double twins had an uneasy sense of "putting on airs" in being served for this first important meal in their own house; a feeling which was heightened by Ceescy's liberal use of the impressive china which had been part of the house furnishing.

After the ordeal of playing their part at their own table was over, the double twins wandered aimlessly out into the library, a library guiltless of books.

"Didn't you always think a library was something you had to have cards to?" asked Hazie of either of the others who chose to reply. "I thought it was a thing where you could get books for nothing, if you went to night school, or something like that. I never knew it was a room in a house, did you?"

"Search me!" said Daisy. "I don't see any books around. Maybe they took them off when they went. Maybe the man that built this house was going to have a library for the mill hands, like we want to fix up nice things for 'em. And there's the drawing-room! What, under the sun, do you suppose they went and built a big room like that for and made it so grand just to draw in?"

"That's another name for a parlor, I believe," said Maizie. "I don't believe it means pitcher drawing.

Maybe it's where they had folks to tea, and so they named it for where they put the tea to draw. And didn't you see the library over to Miss Allaire's? We went in there the first night we was over. There's heaps and stacks of books in cases all around, don't you remember? That's a library; a room where they keep their books, when they know enough to buy books. Say, girls, sometimes it just gets me, the things we ain't! 'Course we're only starting, but, say, ain't it a long ways to go! I'm just as stuck on the fun and the clothes and all as ever I was, just as much as any of us, but it's beginning to soak into me that it's up to us to learn things, and, jiminy, what a lot there is, if you once open your eyes — ears, too!"

"We'll get there, Eli!" said Taizie cheerfully. "Somebody's driving in. It's a two-seater, brown horse, awful nice man driving, lady in behind and a girl — "

"Ginger! It's Nancy Porter! Must be her mother and the doctor with her!" cried Daisy, looking over Taizie's shoulder. "You're all as mussed up as you can be! I ain't much better, but some; I'll let 'em in. We've got to get used to shedding old clothes and wearing them new ones right along."

The other three girls fled, and Daisy went to the door in a flustered state of mind. She found on the steps Nancy and her mother; the doctor was driving away, but he saluted Daisy with a wave of his hand,

raising his hat and revealing a great shaggy head and a face so full of wisdom and kindness and goodness that Daisy stared after him, wishing that he would not go.

Nancy was smiling up at her with her sweet face wreathed in the smiles that no one in all the Chagfords could resist, for "the doctor's little girl," as she was called, was beloved by every one. Beside Nancy stood a lady whose first effect was simple goodness and lovableness, but whose face, on a second glance, was beautiful. She had soft brown hair, simply arranged, her tinting was as fresh as a girl's, her lips firm, yet sweet, her eyes under their dark lashes alight with that beautiful look that only the one word "motherly" describes.

"This is my mother —" Nancy stopped; she did not know by which name she should present this special Coggs twin to her mother.

"I'm Daisy," its owner said. She led the way into the drawing-room of which she was exceedingly proud, although its name did puzzle her.

"I'll call the bunch," Daisy said and disappeared; she had no desire to support the burden of a call alone.

After a while all four Coggs girls came down. Daisy had changed her gown in the meantime and there was no difference between them in the degree of splendor which they presented. They were dressed in princess gowns, no two alike in color, each made

from a light and bright silk, or satin, trimmed with velvet and lace. The twins wore a great deal of striking jewelry; rings flashed on hands that had not had time yet to soften and whiten after the hard work they had bravely done all their brief existence, chains dangled and stick pins stuck in all possible — and impossible — places.

Mrs. Porter was so sympathetic to all young things that she understood this gorgeousness to be an expression of the double twins' joy in no longer being obliged to look shabby, a delight in having, like the delight of a baby set down in a field of bloom, gathering every bright flower-head within reach of her tiny hands for the joy of abundance.

Mrs. Porter's greeting jumped ahead of Nancy's presentation of the twins to her.

Though Nancy called each name, she left it to the girls to attach themselves to the right one, for she could not do it for them.

In a few moments, which Mrs. Porter skilfully bridged, these girls felt perfectly at home with her, sure of her sympathy, and were all talking at once of what had been done, what was to be done with their new wealth.

"We got a car when we was to Boston," announced Daisy.

"My dear! You didn't buy a car without some one to advise you!" cried Mrs. Porter.

"Surest thing you know!" cried Taizie jubilantly. "Ain't it the greatest ever? But it wa'n't so much to do as it sounds."

"No," Maizie took up the story. "Mr. Carberry and Mr. Dermot told us which one they'd get, and Mr. Dermot give us a card to a man he knew in the store where they keep 'em; so all we had to do was to see which size we wanted and what color, and that's dead easy. There's a gentleman they keep to run 'em going to bring it here about to-morrow. It's grey, kind o' silvery. He said he'd be able to try it on the way and see it hadn't anything wrong about it. We've got to get a show-for."

"I'll bet anything I'll run it myself by and by!" declared Taizie. "Oh, say, Mrs. Porter, we're crazy when we think about it all! Straight goods, wouldn't any one be?"

"We went to Boston and bought us clothes," said Maizie, regarding her gown with a satisfaction that she tried to disguise. Then she glanced at Mrs. Porter and Nancy, and the simplicity of their attire, the soft, refined colors they wore, their lack of any ornaments but an old-fashioned pearl and amethyst brooch which fastened Mrs. Porter's collar, and a thread-like chain, from which hung a small moonstone ball, around Nancy's neck, and a misgiving came over her.

"We've got to get servants, so Mr. Carberry said," Taizie resumed. "He made us bring a colored lady

— or he made us get some one and Hazie found her — from over to the Falls. We've got to hunt a bunch. We don't know how we'll act with 'em! But we don't feel so dumb with Cleopatra Samaria Cantata as we expected — got a fit, Nancy?" she interrupted herself.

At the sound of these remarkable syllables Nancy had fallen over sidewise in her chair and was hanging over its arm in an agony of laughter.

Mrs. Porter, too, laughed, and the four twins joined her.

"Ain't it the limit of a name!" Daisy gasped. "We don't notice it so much now, but ain't it the limit! We call her Ceescy for short."

"Dear little, queer little quartette!" cried Mrs. Porter. "You are only big children; two of you are but a little more than a year older than my Nancy! Why not have a simpler household at first, not use all the house, and so require fewer to do its work? I have but one woman to do my work. Letty Hetty is rather a friend than a servant. I've found that it makes a great deal of work — of another sort — for the housekeeper who employs many. Don't you think it would be better for you to practise housekeeping a while, before you launch out into a large way of doing it?"

"Oh, say, Mrs. Porter, don't advise us to cut out all the spread," Daisy implored her. "We've been

doing without enough butter to spread, honest! So wouldn't you want to plunge in, if you was us?"

"Indeed I should!" cried Mrs. Porter, so heartily that Daisy patted her before she thought. "I wouldn't prevent you from spreading, if I could! All I meant was I would not try to do everything at once; I'd begin with a street piano for my march, for instance, and march to a brass band after I had learned the step." She smiled at the girls, sure that this illustration would appeal to them.

It did, but her motherliness appealed to them more. Maizie, who had been watching her thoughtfully for some time, spoke.

"It's the queerest thing, but getting rich's just like wearing spectacles. There don't one thing look like it did to me. I can hear how we talk. We went to school off and on, mostly off, when we was little, and we made it off for good after we got to be ten, only just enough going to dodge the school cop. We was in the Fourth Reader, 'cause we are all awful quick at figgering, and that puts you ahead, but, honest to goodness, we can't read right off, decent, yet! We've got to learn. I'm going to learn, and drag the other three Coggses into it, if I die doing it! We've got to copy, so we've got to look out for something to copy. Hazie and I see it plainest, but the rest are getting their eyes open, too. You wouldn't — would you show us a thing or two, once in a while, Mrs. Por-

ter?" Maizie's hesitation, the wistful look on her jolly face was attractive.

"Indeed I will! I'll show you anything at any time that I can! Come to me whenever you like, day or night, and let me help you out. I'll tell you! We will make a bargain on the spot! Nancy and I — the doctor is always part of Nancy and me, so this means Doctor Porter, too — will adopt you for our own special property, and you shall adopt us. We will work together to make you both safe and happy. Years hence, you nice little sparrows, you will realize how easily you could have been trapped and killed at this time. For it's by no means all play to have wealth, and a great deal can go wrong with unprotected children like you, who have suddenly received this great power for good or ill. So is it a bargain? Will you take Nancy and her mother for your real friends and trust them — and the big doctor whom you are sure to love — to love you and stand by you?"

Mrs. Porter's hands were held out at the end of her speech, but her motherly eyes spoke a more irresistible persuasion. The double twins, who had never more than dimly guessed what motherhood was like, fell on her, all four at once, with a whoop of joy and hugged her breathless. There were tears in their honest eyes, but they laughed as they always did.

"Will we? Will we take you and Nancy?" cried

Taizie, swinging from Mrs. Porter to Nancy, and crushing her slender little body in a bear-like hug.

"Well, you watch us!" cried Hazie, but Mrs. Porter could not "watch them," for her hat was knocked over her eyes.

"Oh, you peach!" sighed Maizie.

"You're our biggest piece of luck yet," declared Daisy, and she was entirely right.

The doctor was waiting, so after this ratification of the bargain Mrs. Porter and Nancy went away. The doctor looked amazed, as well he might, when the double twins appeared on the piazza seeing his wife and little girl off. But, though his eyebrows went up with a comical glance at his wife for comment on the extreme glory in which "the ladies of the lake," as he dubbed them, were arrayed, he understood Mrs. Porter and Nancy's wordless telegram to him that they thoroughly liked and approved these queer Chagford acquisitions.

He waved his hand which held the whip that he never used on Tonic, his horse, and called to them:

"I'm coming to see you myself in a day or so, so be prepared for the worst! My instruments will be sharp and ready, and I shall amputate, or dictate, whatever I see fit."

The doctor had a leonine head. His raised hat disclosed a thick crop of iron grey hair. His voice was full and rich, a deep voice, yet most gentle in

tone. His face was, as Daisy murmured, "splendid," a face stamped with thought, experience of men, books and life, above all with simple goodness, strength and sweetness, unselfishness.

After the Porters had driven out of the long driveway, past the painted monstrosities in iron, to represent bronze deers, dogs and a horse, which the Coggs girls admired tremendously and which studded their lawn, the double twins stood for a few moments quiet, almost wistful.

"That's a dear little thing, that Nancy," said Hazie at last.

"She's awful quiet now, but her eyes just shut up laughing, and she looks terrible bright. I think she's a peach," said Daisy.

"I wonder why she wouldn't be, with a mother like that! Say, ain't she warming, girls, kind o' like a fireplace?" Maizie said slowly. "And such voices! Did you catch on? Just as soft and nice as singing. You wouldn't think plain talk could sound so nice. Nancy's voice sounds like some kind o' fluke, or whatever that is they play in orkresters, all silvery sweet, like. And Mrs. Porter's! You'd think she was stroking you! And did you hear the way the doctor spoke? His voice sounds like — like the best coffee tastes; warms you and makes you feel good. Oh, say, what's the use? You could buy all the jewelry and cars they is and you wouldn't be like that!"

There was silence for a moment as the four twins pensively considered their lack. Then Taizie revived. She turned to go into the house, saying:

"There's heaps o' use. We can catch things easy. We'll hire a teacher and we'll be copy-cats to beat the band. We've caught money; I guess we can catch on; it's easier'n catching money! We won't be Porters, but we'll be staving Coggses! Haven't we got the Porters for our own; didn't they say so? Gee, but I'm crazy about them, and so are you all, I see that. It's easy enough to copy folks when you're crazy about 'em. Brace up, Maizie!"

With which Taizie, the liveliest of the lively doublets, went into the palatial residence which was now the Coggs' own.

CHAPTER VI

THE HONK OF THE HORN

"YOU don't suppose it's come and us not up?" cried Hazie from her room, as she sat erect in bed.

"That's what it has!" Taizie called back to her, and Hazie heard the thud of two bare soles strike the floor, and knew that Taizie had swung herself out of bed by the head rods and had gone to the window to make sure that their fears were realized.

An automobile horn was honk-honking in the driveway, though it was not yet half-past six. All the previous day the double twins had done nothing whatever but walk from window to window, out of the door to the piazza, down the driveway to scan the road, back again and then out again, *da capo*, all the livelong day, watching for the first gleam of their new car's shining grey paint, which was due to appear before night.

It did not appear, and the twins had gone to bed badly disappointed. Now, before they were up, the

car had arrived, depriving them of the pleasure upon which they had counted, of seeing it draw near, hearing its horn as it wound around the lake road, being drawn up in an array of all four to receive it when it should turn in at the driveway gate.

"Botheration!" exclaimed Daisy, drawing the lace curtain into a bunch before her and peeping through it at the car just below the window. "I wanted to see it coming!"

"So did I," said Maizie, "but I suppose it's pretty near enough for the Coggs twins to own a car, have it get here any old way! We'll be down in a minute," she called, throwing open her window, which was so situated that it allowed her to speak to the chauffeur without being seen.

The four girls made a record in dressing that morning, Daisy scoring above the others by three minutes less time consumed. They put on one-piece gowns, low shoes, to save extra buttoning and nearly pulled their hair out, jerking the comb through its tawny snarls. Daisy and Taizie, who were ready first, honorably waited for the other two before going down. It was not above two minutes, but sometimes one minute holds sixty greatly elongated seconds.

The four rushed down the stairs and fell against the door in a bunch, tugging frantically to get it open, retarding the operation. The lock stuck and so did the bolt.

"You'll get a dose!" said Maizie through her teeth, meaning a dose of oil, though no locks could reasonably be supposed to work with four hands upon them.

The door flew open violently, when it did open, revealing the new car just in front of it.

"Oh, there you are!" exclaimed Daisy foolishly, as if she had been expecting to find the car elsewhere, or something else.

"I thought I'd get through last night," said the chauffeur, getting down, "but it was useless to rush her, so I put up twenty-five miles away and started a little after five this morning. She's all right, Miss Coggs. You'll like her; I can guarantee she's perfect."

"We like her now," said Maizie, accepting the man's pronoun for the car. "We'd like it if you'd stay and run her."

"Oh, I'm to stop over a day or so, to start you and demonstrate her for you, but then I'm to get back to the garage. We're selling cars like bargain-counter gloves this spring," said the chauffeur. "Where am I to put her? If you'll send some one, or tell me where it is, I'll run her into your garage."

The twins looked at one another in dismay. Where was their garage? *What* was their garage, for that matter?

Maizie was quick at guessing, and her faculties

were getting sharpened in the direction of new words and new ways. She surmised that a garage must be a kind of automobile stable, if one "ran her into it."

"We haven't one, not a regular one," said Maizie, avoiding the word of uncertain pronunciation, to her sisters' admiration. "But there's a big barn on the place that'll hold her all right. You might run her in there. It's right around the driveway, back of the house. We'll have some breakfast pretty soon."

The chauffeur touched his hat, getting into the car and starting "her" to the barn.

Daisy danced a brief jig of joy the moment it had rounded the curve.

"You're getting there, Maize! You answered up like a perfect lady! Bet he didn't see you didn't have a sign of a gruje, or whatever it is, in your head!" she cried.

Maizie swung herself into the house with pretended disdain.

"On my father's fine estate on Staten Island we grew grujes by the acre," she said.

And the other three Coggs girls followed her, quite bent over with laughter.

Breakfast was an embarrassing ordeal, but it was gone through with fairly well.

The chauffeur proved to have a justifiable appetite

after his early drive, so that his fourfold hostess lost fear of being criticized and managed quite well.

"I suppose you young ladies will want to be going out right away?" the chauffeur suggested. "Or maybe your mother — or an aunt, is it, who looks after you? — will come down soon and you'll wait for her?"

The double twins laughed gaily. "We haven't any mother, and there isn't an aunt on the place! Nobody looks after us but us; we're all there is, but we don't need any more," cried Taizie. "Sure, we'd like to go out just as soon as you want to take us. Do you have to fix up the car, or — or — would you like to see the place, or — or smoke?" added Taizie, trying her best to be polite, and considerably at loss as to the form of hospitality they ought to offer.

The chauffeur looked thoroughly surprised at this announcement of the total of the household, but he laughed and his eyes softened, as he regarded the four copies of the Coggs design of a twin. He knew nothing of their peculiar history, but he was beginning to estimate them accurately as he had little girls of his own.

"Bless your heart, miss, I don't smoke, and I'll see the place enough while I'm showing you what kind of a prize you've got in your car. I've nothing to do to her; she's all right, ready for her next trip. I'll take you around Chagford, or we'll make a special

trip somewhere, go to Haverhill, or some place, say about twenty, or twenty-five miles away, just as you like."

The twins drew in a long, collective breath. Vast expanses of the world and pleasure stretched out before them at these magic words.

"I guess, maybe, we'd better run around Chagford to-day," said Maizie, trying to speak carelessly. "If you can stay to-morrow we could go — there, wherever it was, and maybe take Mrs. Porter and Nancy along."

"I'll be going to-morrow afternoon, Miss Coggs, but till then I'm yours obediently," said the chauffeur. "I'll go and get the car out, and maybe feed her oil and water, while you are getting your automobile coats and bonnets on."

"Oh, we've got 'em!" cried Hazie, betraying, to the other twins' chagrin, that she thought the chauffeur might suspect them of not being properly equipped for their new glory.

The double twins had provided themselves with automobiling garments when they were in Boston, after they had selected the car. They hurried away now to don them. They each had a long silk coat, at least five years older in style than the wearers' years; one wine color, one dark green, one blue, the fourth light brown. With the coats were bonnets, close, yet contriving to look grown-up and striking. The veils

over them seemed to spread upon the wind more than ordinary veils, but then these four young girls always seemed to affect everything they did and wore emphatically, heightening the effect.

The new automobile was a touring car of seven-passenger capacity. The generous twins had decided that they should want to share the pleasure of the car and that when they were spending so much for one "a thousand more wouldn't matter." Having said which, with a fine air of carelessness, Taizie, the speaker, had danced a breakdown with her head on one side, her skirts airily lifted, to express her sense of the inexpressible humor of a thousand dollars being a matter of indifference to the Coggs twins.

When the new car in all the beauty of its long, slender lines, its swift, steady motion, its shining silvery paint, its glossy maroon cushions, showing most in the middle seats where Hazie sat in solitary grandeur, for Taizie insisted on sitting by the driver while the other two tried their best to fill the wide rear seat and not bounce too much, when this splendid new outfit appeared in Chagford it created a sensation. The Coggs twins were the subject of conversation; tales of their funny sayings and doings went from lip to lip; everybody liked them, but everybody found them funny, and not a few took melancholy pleasure in predicting their ruin, unguarded, untrained, with immense wealth in their hands and more coming to them.

Now that they drove through the various Chagfords in this "more than Oriental splendor" people stared at them, and reported to those who had not seen them that "the Coggs twins had bought them a car."

Luncheon was hurried in order to make the afternoon as long as possible for driving. Daisy said that it was "kinder nice not to be afraid you'd tire the thing."

In the afternoon the double twins persuaded Miss Belinda Allaire, Mrs. Porter and Nancy to drive with them. The big car took them swiftly through lovely country, turning toward home not far from the New Hampshire state line; it drove even more steadily than before, with three of the Coggs girls in the middle seats, Taizie still beside the chauffeur and their guests in the rear seat.

The chauffeur was summoned back to Boston by a telegram which arrived during the afternoon. "Return at once. Demonstrate big sale negotiating," it read.

The chauffeur handed the telegram over to the twins. "Orders from headquarters," he said with brevity like the telegram's. "You see, I can't take you out to-morrow, as we planned, but you have been shown what a good car you have and you must get a chauffeur of your own, in any case."

"But we want to go again right off!" protested Hazie, almost ready to cry. "It's awful to have your

own car and just taste it and then have to wait and wait to go out in it!"

The chauffeur's time was not his own, so there was no use in bewailing his going. There were four faces more downcast than one would have supposed Coggs faces could be around the table of the bookless library after supper, and Maizie had a headache from her unaccustomed rapid driving through miles of strong breeze.

"Oh, gracious, I didn't know a red-head could ache so hard!" she groaned, supporting hers in her hands, her elbows on the arm of the big chair in which she sat curled sidewise.

"A red-head ought to have a particularly feverish headache, my dear," said a voice, and Maizie faced around with a jump to see Doctor Porter, who had been admitted by Ceescy, unheard by the twins, standing inside the doorway, pulling off his gloves and smiling at her.

"Did I frighten you, new neighbors?" the doctor asked. "Nancy wanted to come with me, but her mother needed her to-night, so I've ventured alone. I am Nancy Porter's father, and I have come to thank the four girls who gave Mrs. Porter and Nancy such a pleasant afternoon."

"Pleased to see you," murmured the twins in an embarrassed quartette.

"How can you be sure which one has the head-

ache?" the doctor asked. "You are so wonderfully alike! Or have you all headaches from that splendid new car?"

"No, sir; Maizie's got a headache," said Hazie, at whom he chanced to look last.

"I have something with me, in my pocket, that will relieve a car headache, if you will take it in water and sit, or, better, lie, quiet for a short time," said the doctor, producing a small phial of powder.

Hazie ran away to get the water and a spoon, and, before she knew it, Maizie had taken the remedy and was tucked away on a couch in a darker corner of the room where she "could be seen and not heard," Doctor Porter said. "Which was the olden prescription for making a child well-behaved."

The double twins knew Doctor Porter from the instant he spoke to them. It was his great gift to win instant trust and liking. The twins' confidence went out to him, just as it had to his wife, and they began to chatter to him easily and without reserve.

"Ain't it fierce?" demanded Taizie. "We was going out to-morrow morning and now the gentleman that brought the car here's got to go back first pop! And we can't do a single thing but go out and look at the thing till we get a show-for to take us, and we don't know any more where to look for a show-for 'n the dead!"

"I have one in my pocket," said the doctor gravely.

"I happened to have the headache medicine in my actual coat-pocket, but I came purposely to tell you that I have a chauffeur for you in my figurative pocket. I know the very man of men for you to employ. His name is Elijah, Elijah Riggs. His brother, Stephen, has been looking after my horse, Tonic, and me and my affairs for years. Elijah is a skilled mechanic and has learned to run a car perfectly; he is as trustworthy as he can be, in every way; just the person to take out four such youthful ladies as the Coggs girls. I urge you to let me send Elijah here and to engage him, for he will be every bit as faithful as old dog Tray, and there are not many chauffeurs to whom Mrs. Porter and I would care to see children like you entrusting yourselves."

"Oh, say, don't that sound good!" cried Maizie from her couch, in irrepressible satisfaction. "Not Mr. Riggs, though goodness knows we can't wait to get a show-for, but you saying you and Mrs. Porter would worry about us — or that's what it means, ain't it? It's awful good to think you've got somebody standing back like that, thinking!"

"It sure does sound good, Maize," the twin agreed. "And we sure will take Mr. Riggs, if he'll come. Hurry up, Maizie, and get over enough of the headache to tell Doctor Porter what we said about — you know!" Daisy ended with significant nods and scowls.

"I guess I can now," said Maizie, rising slowly and carefully, not to bring her head into its usual position too suddenly. She came forward slowly and the doctor arose to place a chair for her, one that would support the back of her head, for, as she advanced, Maizie announced that she "felt awful wobbly."

"We was thinking, Doctor Porter," Maizie said, as her sisters sat looking hard at her, waiting for her to speak. "We saw you, and we're clean gone on Mrs. Porter and Nancy."

"Thank you; so am I," said the doctor without a smile. "I have felt that way about Mrs. Porter for a quarter of a century, and just as much so toward her daughter for nearly thirteen years — as long as I have known them both."

Maizie nodded, laughing, and all four pairs of eyes twinkled back at the doctor in response to the twinkle which he permitted himself at the end of his nonsense.

"Sure," said Maizie, approving. "Well, you know, we'd ought to have a guardeen, or some one, some man, to look after us. Peter Debbs ain't doing a thing in the grandfather line. He just chucks us the money and says: 'Go ahead, any old way.' We don't want to do it; we want to go ahead the best way. You wouldn't want — you couldn't — would it be asking too much — "

Maizie halted, seized with an unforeseen sense of the impossibility of asking what she had set out to ask.

"Be our guardeen," Taizie blurted out, and then stopped, too, frightened — for a Coggs!

The doctor hesitated, frowning, but a thoughtful, not a displeased frown. He smiled very kindly at the four who interested all Chagford so greatly, but who appealed to the doctor and his wife, as all young things appealed to them, with a desire to stand between their helplessness and the knocks that life might give them.

"My dear little duplicates!" the doctor said, "if you think there's no one better — "

To every one's surprise, most of all to her own, Hazie interrupted him with a little impetuous cry.

"There ain't any one better, no man; we knew it that first day when you waved your hand to us, when you brought Mrs. Porter and Nancy here," she said.

"Then I'll gladly be your guardian, not before the law, you know, but just between ourselves," said the good doctor, putting out his hand to pat Hazie's shoulder. "It shall be understood between us that I am to advise you and serve you, that you are to come to me with all your little bothers, just as Nancy would, and that when you think the dose I prescribe for that sort of welfare is not quite the flavor you would choose, you will swallow it, nevertheless, just as Maizie took my headache prescription. You will

play I am a sort of adopted old father and I will play that you are my adopted twin daughters. But all this is to be quite between ourselves. Is that the arrangement you had in mind, but, evidently, feared to suggest?"

The doctor's eyes were full of fatherly kindness as they rested on these girls, who were wholly alone in the world, and yet only a little older than his dear child, whose life had unfolded amid the most devoted and wisest love.

Something new and unknown to herself leaped up in Taizie, who was the gayest, the most headlong of the four. She plunged at Doctor Porter and caught him around the neck with an enthusiasm that frightened her, later, to remember. She laid her head on the doctor's shoulder; her brilliant hair, standing out in all directions, tickled him dreadfully, but he would not have betrayed it for the world.

"It's heaps more than we wanted to ask, heaps and heaps, because you say it so different!" she cried. "You're just the dearest ever, and we never had the least speck of a father! If ever we can do something for you, you watch us, that's all!"

"Well, well, little Taizie," said the doctor, patting her, as he patted Nancy, and venturing to smooth back her obstreperous hair by way of a caress. "You shall have a speck of a father now, and as to doing something for me, there'll be plenty of chance, plenty.

I'm longing to build a hospital here and you shall help. We've settled a good deal in a short time — Elijah Riggs as chauffeur, me as guardian, Maizie's headache — I hope? How is it, Maizie?"

"Gone," said Maizie. "When'll Mr. Riggs come? My, but we're thankful to you, Doctor Porter!"

"I'll send Elijah here to-morrow. I'll engage him for you, so it will be settled when you see him," said the doctor. "And, actually, I had forgotten the message from Nancy! She is going to ask a few friends to meet you next Tuesday. There are her friends, Mimi Hunt and Doris Clark, nice girls. And Amabel Willis, the beauty of Chagford, and her sweet elder sister, Louise, and a gypsy-like child, Cordelia Tilden, called Cord, younger than Nancy, and dear little Grandma Emerson, who is actual grandmother to no one and adopted grandmother to every one — these are coming to be made acquainted with the double twins, so please come and make new friends. Nancy and her mother — and your new-old guardian — would like to have you know nice people, my dears, and these are all nice people, each in her own way."

"It scares us green," said Daisy candidly, "but we'll be there."

"Please thank Nancy," added Maizie, which small touch of politeness showed that she was beginning to learn the ways of her new world.

The doctor left the house with a lasting affection

established between himself and the four warm-hearted girls, who were unusually quick to feel gratitude and repay kindness with devotion.

Almost at once the twins began to make preparations for their first appearance in Chagford society. There is no saying what costumes they might have planned to wear had not Nancy made a point of dropping in on them for a hurried visit, in the course of which she conveyed a welcome hint to them that all white would be the prettiest thing for an afternoon party in June.

So the girls arrayed themselves in four white gowns which were too elaborate, but still made them look girlish, and threw into relief the bright tints of their hair and cheeks. Wrapped in the decidedly grown-up motor coats the double twins got into the car, all in its party dustlessness and with Elijah, as calmly ready to take them to Doctor Porter's as if a party did not matter.

Elijah was a real treasure. The double twins called him "Mr. Riggs," unable to bring themselves to the self-confidence required to address their staid, past-forty chauffeur as Elijah. He was a skilful driver, incapable of recklessness, and he was so respectable and so kind that, under his guardianship, the four young girls needed no chaperon for their youthful freedom in the big car.

When they got to the doctor's "the party was

there," as Hazie said. It was waiting for their coming with extreme interest.

Nancy took the Coggs girls up-stairs to set right the damage done their hair by the big hats they had worn, feeling that an automobile bonnet was not the thing to wear to a party. Nancy looked at them anxiously. She was not one bit afraid of what Mimi Hunt, Doris Clark, nor the sweet elder Willis girl, Louise, would think of them, but Amabel Willis was "sniffylofti-cal," as Doris called it, and Nancy was afraid she might feel called upon to snub these rough diamonds, whom the Porters recognized for genuine gems, though they weren't polished — yet.

Nancy saw that the white gowns were wrought and trimmed into agony and that the twofold twins wore an amazing amount of jewelry, but, on the whole, they looked better than she had seen them, so merry, wholesome and affectionate that her heart went out to them, the more that she thought she saw a shade of anxiety underneath their breezy self-confidence. Nancy hugged the twin nearest her on the impulse of the moment and saw afterward that it was Taizie. Taizie hugged her back again, with interest, then they all five went down-stairs.

The double twins heard themselves presented to the three girls, Mimi, Doris and Amabel, and to Miss Willis, after Mrs. Porter had met them with her own convincing hospitality.

Taizie, because she felt embarrassed, and knew that her sisters did, plunged straightway into praise of the new "autymobile" and of "Mr. Riggs." She offered on the spot to take all of Nancy's guests driving in it, and told Louise Willis to "cut out the Miss" when Louise used the prefix in speaking to her.

All the girls looked amused, but not unkindly so, except Amabel, and she fulfilled Nancy's worst fears by speaking to the Coggs with frigid politeness, at the same time most impolitely trying to lead them on to betray their deficiencies. Nancy's cheeks were on fire, sensitive, sweet Nancy, who was endowed with tiny nerves in all directions to feel other people's hurts, and who would as soon have cut off her hand as disregard any one's feelings.

A tiny little old lady arrived later, whom Nancy ran to greet with evident relief, hailing her as Grandma Emerson. She was a dear little old lady, with pink cheeks and a sprightly manner, and a smile that not only lit up her porcelain-white face, but lit up the room. After she had come, and Rick Lovering came home and brought his violin to play for them, the party became more lively. Rick played as if he were inspired; he was more than merely talented musically; he was likely to become a great violinist.

They danced in spite of the heat. Grandma Emerson actually helped Maizie master steps which she did not know, but which she picked up at once.

Another girl had come late to the party, a small, elfin creature, as dark as a gypsy, thin, overflowing with restless energy and mischief. This was Cordelia Tilden, whom they all called Cord. The Coggs girls discovered that she was an orphan who lived with two old sisters in the village and "helped around," going to school and being looked after in the simple fashion of which Chagford was still capable.

The Coggs girls wondered sincerely why Amabel felt called upon to snub them, yet tolerated Cord; they decided that it was because Cord was younger than Nancy, which was as good a reason as another, perhaps.

Cordie evidently considered the double twins as a gift direct from heaven. She rarely found any one who gratified her chronic yearning for "something doing," and the double twins' liveliness and splendor struck straight to Cord's innermost heart.

Rick's music inspired Daisy Coggs to start her sisters to dance a wild Hungarian folk dance which they had learned from children who danced it madly, to the strains of hurdy-gurdies, in the New York streets.

The double twins danced their dance with entire unrestraint, swinging, bending, whirling ever faster and faster. They danced it well, but it was such a wild dance, so utterly outside anything Chagford had ever seen, that the girls did not know whether to condemn it or not, though they could not help admiring

it and Cordie was nearly crazy over it. Amabel shrugged her shoulders and made no comment at the end of this dance, but she allowed her face to comment severely upon it.

Grandma Emerson and Louise Willis praised the Coggs girls' grace and skill. Louise proposed a dancing-class for that summer, saying that the double twins would make the best dancers of them all. But the Coggs girls felt that Grandma Emerson and Louise, in Mrs. Porter's absence, were smoothing something away which they themselves could not see.

Nancy's cheeks were flaming; she looked distressed. The double twins knew that there was something about their dance that was not quite acceptable; they were annoyed, as any one is who is puzzled by disapproval not understood, and they were bitterly sorry that Nancy did not quite enjoy their contribution to her entertainment. With this they felt a perfectly human and justifiable desire to "shake the poppycock nonsense" out of Amabel.

Mimi Hunt sprained her ankle slightly, just after the delicious refreshments which Letty Hetty, the Porters' treasure of a general houseworker, had made were served. It was not a bad sprain, but it put an end to the dancing which Doctor Porter had come to join. Mimi could not dance, and so no one else cared to.

"Us girls is going home, right straight," announced

Taizie Coggs. "We'll take Mimi home; she can't walk, and we'll give Cord a ride some further; it's easy to see she wants it! And we'll take the whole bunch of you home, if you'll go; we can hold a girl, each of us Coggses, and that'll leave a whole seat alone for Amy Bell Willis and Miss Willis. Mrs. Emerson won't mind being held like the other girls; she's just the girliest girl of the lot."

"No, I thank you," said Amabel turning away.

"Oh, come on!" cried Daisy, with an angry little laugh. "Turn the auty— automobile into a refrig— cold storage car."

Mimi hid her face to laugh into the couch pillow on which she lay; Mimi was a great giggler, and there was no one there who did not inwardly applaud Daisy's hit.

"I've got to stop at the library, but you are just as kind as you can be to be willing to crowd us all into your car," said Louise Willis hastily. There was a look in her gentle blue eyes that prophesied an elder-sisterly lecture for Amabel when they were at home.

"We're going to give everybody part of our fun all the time," announced Taizie. "We're coming to take out Letty Hetty; we'll take you, if you'll go," she looked at the Willis girls uncertainly.

"Indeed I'll go, gladly!" cried Louise, who was, as Nancy often said, "the most perfect dear." "It is

beautiful to love to share your happiness! I want to go to see you; may I?"

"Surest thing there is!" "Well, I should say!" cried two twins together, proving they were just enough not to hold Louise responsible for Amabel.

It was a packed automobile that Elijah drove away from the party. All the guests were in it, except the Willis girls; Mimi had to be disposed comfortably and Hazie insisted on holding her foot, to keep the sprained muscles level.

The twins thanked and kissed Mrs. Porter and Nancy and kept out of sight the hurt pride, the sore annoyance Amabel Willis had caused them. They had been blissful in their new car and new raiment and flashing gems; since their change of fortune they had basked with entire single-mindedness in the sunny kindness they had been shown. Now they had been made to feel that they were not fit to associate with a girl properly taught and trained. The first instinct was indignant rebellion. But it hurt. They all four wondered to discover how it did hurt and they generously hoped that Nancy had not seen how much they minded this new experience.

CHAPTER VII

"A CUP AND SAUCER FIT"

AFTER the double twins had stopped at Mimi Hunt's home and Elijah had carried her into the house, Doris had been taken home, Grandma Emerson and Cord had been given a short drive and taken to their respective homes, the Coggs girls drove back to the big house by the lake, silently, now that there was no one to entertain, and unusually thoughtful.

They walked up the steps in single file; ordinarily they ran into the house, pushing past one another in a frolic that was part of their arrival.

They went solemnly into the drawing-room, moved by a common impulse to seek their most dignified apartment.

Daisy unwound her veil; luckily she could not see its effect on a large hat jolted completely awry.

"She's no better'n Nancy Porter," she said gloomily.

"She's not a patch on Nancy; what's good enough for Nancy's good enough for any girl in this town," declared Taizie.

"She's not such a much!" said Hazie. "I'd as lief talk queer and not know things as be so nasty to folks who hadn't done a thing to me. But she's awful pretty!"

Maizie pulled off her gauntleted gloves, thoughtfully straightening each finger. Then she pulled out a hat pin and, using it to punctuate her words, said:

"I wonder what we're going to do about it!"

"I wouldn't let on I noticed her," advised Daisy.

"I don't mean that," said Maizie. "'Course we don't notice *her!* But I guess it's up to us to notice *it.*"

"Now, what on earth — " began Taizie, puzzled by this mysterious sentence.

"I mean we've got to cut it out," said Maizie, so much in earnest that she did not notice the contradiction between her practice and her precept. "We may just as well own up. It doesn't excuse Amy Bell Willis for being snubby — at Nancy's party where she didn't have to come, too! — but we twins have got to take lessons right straight."

"What kind?" cried Taizie alarmed.

"Manners, ways, talk, all the school things we didn't learn, besides reading, writing — specially letters — gogoraphy, the whole shooting match!" cried this reformer.

"H'm! 'Shooting match' don't go, either!" commented Hazie.

"Sure it don't!" agreed Maizie, quite honestly willing to own up. "I'm just as bad as any of us, only I kinder see. We've got to learn what to say and what to stop saying. I hear how smooth Mrs. Porter and Miss Allaire talk, and how there ain't any of these snappy things like 'shooting match,' and all the stuff that kinder makes talk sound lively, like a bunch of newsies selling papers, in anything Nancy Porter says, nor any of her friends. I'm wise to it now; we're 'way off and we've got to get on board."

Taizie threw the other two a comical glance, and all three burst out laughing.

"You got in quite a lot that trip, Maize," said Daisy. "What's the use? If ever we get real warmed up to anything we're saying, like you did then, we'd forget and just load it up with slang. How'd you think we'd get at it, anyway? Not go to school!" she added, seeing that Maizie had a plan.

"When we're just rid of working and being poor!" cried Hazie in terror.

"School, nothing! I mean, of course we won't go back to school, my dear sisters," said Maizie in such a ladylike way that the other three were convulsed. "We'll get a lady to live with us and teach us all the time, call a halt — tell us when we make mistakes at the table, straighten out what we say, give us lessons every day so long, read books to us — all that, you

know! What do you call 'em, something like the fellow that's running the state? Governor? Governess! That's what I mean; a governess to turn us into perfect ladies, so many inches each day, till it's gone the whole length."

"Oh, gee!" sighed Hazie, her voice and her body both drooping. "It'd be just like being a canned tomato, all shut up in a tin can, red head and all."

This melancholy speech sent Maizie, Daisy and Taizie off in peals of laughter, but Maizie persisted in her reform measures.

"We're going down to see Mrs. Porter and tell her what we've got to have. She'll most likely know just the girl to send us. I'd like to have a sort of youngish lady. It'd be fierce to have her grumpy and always taking cold, if she lived right with us here," she said, perceiving the difficulties in getting the kind of companion they would be able to endure.

"Well, sir," said Taizie rising, "if it don't beat the Dutch then I'll sell out cheap! You no sooner get out of a tenement and squirming around to find out whether you'll have enough left of your money to go to a movie that week, and get rich, and think you'll be free to do 'most anything decent 'n' you turn round and tie yourself up in a cage, taking lessons in being a lady! What's the dif? Why not have fun and give other folks fun and not care? 'Tisn't a sin to make breaks in talk and not know fine ways! Why can't

we go as we please for once? It makes me ache! Might's well be a pressed flower in a whopping big heavy dictionary!"

Maizie joined in the laugh that greeted Taizie's words and disgusted expression, but she stuck to her position; she made a wise answer, as well.

"I don't know why we can't, but we can't, Taize, and you know it just as well as I do. We've got to match up with our house and our car and our new chance. I guess you can't be free in this world to do what you please, so you've got to please to do what you've got to. It's a funny thing, but it shoves you right along; you've got to keep on going up. It's like that eskater thing, that moving staircase they have in New York in places; keeps you going up right along. We're going to hate like ginger getting nicer, but we'd know it wasn't nice not to get nicer! No good buying stuff to hang outside with nothing inside. It's Mrs. Porter to-morrow for ours to ask her if she can't get us the lady. I don't envy her the job, poor soul, whoever she is!"

"Flapjacks!" cried Taizie. "I'd heaps rather live with the Coggs girls 'n I would almost anywheres else, so there! I don't care if we ain't regular colleges, we don't lie and we don't scrap — often or bad — and we like to have a good time all round, and we ain't mean, not a bit, and —"

"And we're little tin angels, all painted gay, let you

tell it!" interrupted Daisy. "When it comes to throwing bouquets at yourself, you're it, Taize!"

"No harm throwing bouquets at yourself when there's three more of you, you can't tell apart," maintained Taizie.

"Never are apart to tell," said Daisy, scoring the last word as she ran off up-stairs.

The next afternoon Maizie and Taizie broke through the double twin custom of going about in an unbroken square of four corners, and had Elijah take them down to see Mrs. Porter while Daisy and Hazie went to pay a visit to Grandma Emerson and, later, to meet Lora as she came from work and bring her home with them for the night.

"We'll come down and pick you up," Maizie called back as they drove away.

Daisy grinned back at her cheerfully, not being able to reply. Maizie had caught the expression "pick you up," and used it with "the five o'clock tea voice," as Taizie called it, which she was fond of employing for her ridicule of herself as a fine lady.

Mrs. Porter was alone, humming softly over her sewing, when the big car stopped at the gate. She came out to meet the girls and brought them back to the living-room with her, holding a hand of each in one of hers.

"Let me pull your chairs into the line of breeze," said Mrs. Porter, carrying out her own suggestion.

"Now, hats off! And where are the other two quarters?"

"Gone to see Mrs. Emerson, first, and then to meet Lora Bruce when the mill shuts down; they're going to bring her up to stay all night," said Maizie, putting her automobile bonnet on her knee and rumpling up her hair in a way she had that was not necessary, for her hair was quite equal to rumpling itself.

"Say, Mrs. Porter, dear, we came down to ask you where'd we get a lady to live with us and sandpaper us down and polish us up?"

"Do you mean —" Mrs. Porter hesitated.

"I guess we do," said Maizie laughing.

"A teacher? A companion?" Mrs. Porter still sought for Maizie's exact meaning.

"All two and then some," nodded Maizie. "We want some one to keep at us most all the time, but not to make it so tough we can't stand it. I guess that's a big order, but somebody's got to fill it. You see, we sat up and took notice at Nancy's party, only we tried to make her think we was laying down all the time, not smelling a mice! Amy Bell Willis was pretty nifty, but she gave us a eye-opener. It's so that we ain't like any one else and it's got to be changed! We want a lady to make the change for us. We'll give her plenty of change to pay for it. It's a big job; it's got to be done right. She's got to live right there and keep kinder dropping hints, but there's no getting

out of it: we've got to get her! Who'll it be?"

"My dear Maizie, I'm sure I have no idea!" cried Mrs. Porter. "But I approve of the plan with all my heart. What sensible children you are! What dear ones too, to take Amabel's foolish airs in this spirit, letting them waken in you a desire to remove her excuse for them, and not feeling angry with her! Not that we admit that she has an excuse for being snobbish, especially to such kind, honest girls as the doublets!"

"Ain't you the dear thing!" cried Taizie adoringly. "But we was angry; we're pretty mad yet. We was madder'n hornets when we got home and talked it over. As though if you 'n' the doctor didn't mind us for Nancy — nor Nancy mind us either! — we wasn't good enough for any girl in Chagford, Amy Bell Willis, or any one else! Pretty she is, though! But Maizie, she's the long-headed one! She figured out that it was up to us to get a shine, so we come down to see who's the lady you know that's got the best brushes and outfit. We're getting a fearful lot of folks up to the palace to work, one way and another. We've got another woman, of another color, besides Cleopatra Samaria Cantata. And Mr. Riggs — Elijah, then! — has moved in with his wife and she's going to keep house. Now if we get a lady polisher to rub up the four twins — phew! Where'll it stop?"

Mrs. Porter had one of the refreshing laughs which the twins always gave her, then she said: "The worst of it is that I don't, at this moment, know of any one to recommend to you. But I'll try to think of some one and I'll ask the doctor. If we both fail, and there's no one in Chagford, I'll ask my dear old friend, Mrs. Lawrence, in Boston, to find some one for us. She is sure to have just the person ready to send us, because she is always helping people."

"Do you think the lady has to be even kinder old, Mrs. Porter?" asked Maizie meekly.

"We'd like it so much if she wasn't real old, didn't have to wear great thick round glasses and be stiff in the joints, so she couldn't stand it to let us be silly and noisy. Honest to goodness, I believe we'd die if we got all tied up like that! If she couldn't see a joke, or let us yell around some, well, there wouldn't more'n one twin live through it, and I guess it would be four funerals while we was at it!"

"Oh, Maizie!" sighed Mrs. Porter. "I don't believe there is any one on earth can tone down your irrepressible Coggsiness! I think I hope there isn't! Though I do want you to carry out your plan and learn all that you ought to know, because one day, when you are no longer twin youngsters, but getting old yourselves, you will suffer from the lack. I think your companion need not be in the least old; I think it is necessary that she should be decidedly young and

sympathetic. And I shall insist on her being able to enjoy frolicking and not tie you up in the least."

"Never do you go back on us one mite!" cried Maizie in relief and admiration. "'Twould be pretty hard luck to muffle us, after we'd only just got enough money to buy tin horns all 'round! I hear Nancy coming; she's talking to the dog and the cat."

Nancy came in, cool and fresh looking in her fine blue gingham, her hat shading her wide, candid brow.

"Hullo, girls!" she called as she came. "Which two is it? Letty Hetty said two Coggs twins were here."

"It's us, Maizie and Taizie. Hullo, Nancy! We're just going, been here a long time," said the Coggs girls.

"You can't go yet; I've something to tell you that can't wait. I was going to go to see you after tea, if mamma would go with me. How would you like a companion?" asked Nancy, speaking fast.

Mrs. Porter looked up quickly. "How extraordinary! Why do you ask that now, Nancy?"

"Because I've just found one for them where I've been with father," Nancy answered her mother. "It is where father was called, over at North Chagford — I mean there is where she is. She is a young lady, somewhere in the twenties, I think, but you can't tell when a person is ill. She is as weak as she can be, but Doctor Porter and his assistant decided that the

most that ails her is anxiety and loneliness. She is a lady, speaks very prettily, has a nice voice, a sweet, gentle manner. She says her father had a great deal of money, but when he died it proved to be all gone, so she has had to earn her living. She has had a fine education, she says, and it shows. She expected to get a position in Chagford, but was disappointed, and now she is here, ill, without any money. I told her all about the twins and asked her if she would like to be their companion, if they would have one, and she was so glad, and so much too weak to feel glad, that she cried as hard as she could cry for a few minutes."

"Will we have a companion!" cried Taizie. "Isn't that a cup-and-saucer fit! Why, Nancy Porter, we came down to ask your mother to get us a companion — if that's what she'd be. Maizie said governor, no, governess."

"Yes," Maizie echoed her. "We got a pointer or so at your party. Little Cord thinks we're about it, but she's only a kid and a poor child, like we was. But Amy Bell — "

Maizie stopped, for Nancy flushed furiously.

"Don't you care, Nancy," Taizie said hastily. "She's afraid we've got what-do-you-call 'ems? Germs; something ketching in bad manners. She was a frost, but she's done us good. We're going to get a polish on."

"What's this lady's name?" asked Maizie; both girls were wildly excited.

"Didn't I say? She is Miss Rhoda Drummond, the patient father went to see at North Chagford this morning. And, mamma dear, Miss Drummond is all worn out; she's dreadfully weak," said Nancy persuasively. "She's not well enough to do anything now. Mightn't she come here for a little visit, to rest and get well before she began with the girls?"

"Can't we rest her?" cried Taizie, before Mrs. Porter could reply. "Goodness knows, we've got room enough! We're just rattling around in that palace. We won't bother her to tell us anything till she's able. I guess we'll be glad to be let off learning's long's we've got a good excuse! Let her come right up to us, Mrs. Porter; it'll be such fun fussing, getting her rested and strong!"

"You shall have all the fun being kind that we can give you," said Mrs. Porter, with the approving smile which the Coggs girls were beginning to feel was a reward worth struggling to win. "But isn't it better to see Miss Drummond before we settle everything? If you will take me, I will go with you to-night in your car to see the 'cup' which has dropped down among us, ready to set in your 'saucer.' You called the discovery of Miss Drummond 'a cup and saucer fit.'"

"All right; that's more sensible!" said Maizie Coggs. "What luck! Things just roll our way! We'll get fixed up inside to match our fine clothes and we'll get tips on manners! And we need 'em!"

"I am going to take two of the twins, the two they decide upon, to Boston for a day or so at Aunt Mary Lawrence's, Nancy," said Mrs. Porter. "My friend, Mrs. Lawrence, Maizie and Taizie, lives suitably to her great wealth, and with such beautiful standards of taste that you will enjoy seeing her house and — who knows? — perhaps get valuable suggestions for certain funny young heiresses in Chagford to follow. Will you go?"

Maizie bounced up and flew over to kiss Mrs. Porter violently.

"What a peach you are!" she said. Then she looked thoughtful, a little sober.

"It's taking the snap out of us, Grandfather Peter Debbs' setting us up is," she said. "First off we were out for nothing but fun, and now we're hunting ropes to tie us up! I do believe, honest to goodness I do, if we don't look out we won't be so independent as we was when we was poor! I'm getting all dampened down myself!"

Mrs. Porter and Nancy laughed. "Don't worry about your meekness, Maizie," Mrs. Porter said. "I'm quite sure you have plenty of spirit left."

"We won't like the same things, but maybe we'll

like new things just as well," said Taizie. "I guess, maybe, we won't get to be so awful nice that we get stiff. It's the funniest thing, but you can't have a good time in a grand house and automobile if you ain't sure you're cut off the same piece. I can't say it right, but I know what I mean."

"So do I," said Nancy. "Your fairy godmother has put a crown on your head, and dressed you in golden garments and you want to learn to rule over your kingdom."

"H'm?" Maizie scowled over this poetical explanation. "All right; I kinder get that. We don't want Peter Debbs' money to be all there is to us. Come home, Taizie. We'll be down after supper, Mrs. Porter, if you'll go see Miss Drumming — Drummond? — with us, and we're just as thankful as we can be to you and Nancy. What a duck you are, little Nancy, to think us and Miss Drummond together, before you knew we was going to hunt a polishing lady!"

Early in the warm June dusk the lights of the big grey car whitened the road to the doctor's house and threw the arching trees beside it into black shadow.

Mrs. Porter, sitting on the piazza waiting for them, went down the walk without letting the Coggs girls get out to call her.

"I haven't let Nancy go because, if you should take

Miss Drummond home with you to-night, it is better not to crowd the car," she said as Maizie jumped out to help her into the rear seat.

It was seven miles from Doctor Porter's to the small farm where Miss Drummond was boarding, and where she had been overtaken with the serious breakdown which had brought her to the end of her resources and prevented her from renewing them. North Chagford was the most out-lying of the Chagford townships; it was the farming section. Nancy dearly liked to drive there with her father. It took Tonic, who was growing old, a long time to cover the trip, but the slender car sped Maizie, Taizie and Mrs. Porter to the white farmhouse in twenty minutes. Mrs. Pailey, the farmer's wife, took the guests at once to Miss Drummond; she could hardly walk for turning to look at the Coggs twins, whose wonderful story and unexpected speeches were in every one's mouth.

They found Miss Drummond as Nancy had described her, lying inert in a big chair, her hands fluttering nervously in her lap, great dark hollows under her brown eyes, her face thin and white, with a look of strained patience on it.

"My dear, I'm your doctor's wife, Nancy's mother," said Mrs. Porter going up to her with such a warm look of pity and understanding on her lovely face that Rhoda Drummond's eyes filled with the

quick tears of weakness while she smiled back at her, as no one could help doing.

"And these are two of the Coggs girls of whom Nancy says she told you," Mrs. Porter went on. "They are twins, but not twins to each other; the other two, a mate to each of these, are at home. These are Maizie and Taizie, Mary and Teresa, and the ones you do not see are precisely like those you see."

"We're screams," said Taizie. "You can sort us out, though, when you buckle down to it. Awful sorry you don't feel good."

"Yes, we are," Maizie confirmed her. "We wanted, we wondered if — ain't you better?"

Maizie cast an imploring glance at Mrs. Porter, abandoning her attempt at setting forth their errand and mutely begging Mrs. Porter to do this for her.

"You know already what we came to suggest," Mrs. Porter came to Maizie's rescue. "It was Nancy's idea, and she says she broached it to you. These four lovable, good twin girls need what you can give them, teaching from books, teaching by contact and daily hints and example. They have come into wealth, but only lately, so they have missed a great deal that we all take for granted. They were motherless, fatherless, homeless, they could not go to school much, they need what you have had and can give them. On the other hand, you want what they

can give you. Do you suppose you can mutually help one another? I must tell you, Miss Drummond, that after Nancy made her suggestion the doctor looked up the references you gave him and satisfied himself that you are precisely the one for these children's guide. We feel responsible for them, and my husband would not hand them over to a stranger without satisfying himself that he had done his best for them. I thought you would like to know that you are not a stranger to us, after what Doctor Porter learned about you."

"I have lost everything I had in the world," Miss Drummond said; her voice was soft and sweet. "I must earn my living now. If I can teach the Misses Coggs — I think I can — I shall be endlessly grateful to you and your Nancy, for putting me in touch with them when I so desperately needed to be shown a path."

"Do you think you can stand it to live with us?" Maizie asked anxiously. "We don't think we're so bad, but I guess we're pretty far off the trolley nice folks run on. Of course, though, if we had manners and education we wouldn't of needed you, so maybe you'll not mind us too much. We'll try awful hard to make you see a good time; we won't loaf when we study, and we'll do our best to tag on behind when you whistle. We're good natured, and that's honest, and we never did seem to take to meanness and lying

— that's the meanest of all, we say! So you can bank on us for what we are. Do you say you're in for trying it?"

Maizie paused for an answer; the anxious line which was beginning to come often between her eyes making its appearance.

Rhoda Drummond laughed, not a hearty laugh, but an amused little ripple.

"Beggars can't be choosers, my dear girl," she said. "I must accept any chance offered me now. But please let me tell you that you are the heart-warming sort of girls, and I'm not one bit afraid to go to you, I'll like you fast enough, if you'll like me. Thank you ever so much for taking me."

"Oh, gee!" exclaimed Taizie, embarrassed and pleased. "You look awful sweet, only you're too thin and pale to be as pretty as you are; Nancy said you must be pretty when you was well. We'll be tickled pink to get you. You see; that's what we want! You to tell us not to say 'Oh, gee,' and 'tickled pink,' like that."

This time Rhoda Drummond's laugh was nearer the sound of health. "No, you don't!" she cried. "If you already know that's slang and bad form, you don't need me to tell you!"

"To keep us at it — I mean keep us off such sayings," Maizie explained. "Well, say! If you're coming to polish us, you're coming this minute. We're

going to rest you up and have some fun calling you comp'ny and getting Cleopatra Samaria Cantata to fuss up sick folks' stuff for you, till you're stronger'n Sam's son, though who Sam was who had that strong son they tell about, search me! There I go again! You see you'd better hurry and come! Even while you're sick, and we're resting you up, you can switch us off and give us some tips."

This time Miss Drummond's tears not only gathered, but dropped on her pale cheeks.

"You dear, dear girl!" she said. "How can I go while I am so weak, to be a bother to you? Yet how can I not go?"

"It will be quite right to go," Mrs. Porter assured her. "The double twins are longing to taste the joys of ministering to you. They will be the happiest quartette in the world while you need it. Perhaps they will plot to keep you ill; I know what kind of honey bees in clover they will be with some one to serve. But you won't be able to make them happy in that way long! They will keep you laughing till broken nerves mend themselves at once and health will fly back, for it always considers itself summoned by a laugh, you know."

Miss Drummond looked at her with a tremulous smile. "I wonder how it has all happened, just when I was despairing?" she said. "Your dear little daughter is responsible."

"Don't love Nancy Porter better'n us!" Taizie appealed to Miss Drummond, with pretended fear. "Everybody adores her; us, too — adore her, I mean."

"We've got our car and Mr. Riggs, our chauffeur, at the door. Tell us where your things are and we'll bundle 'em up and swipe you!" cried Maizie.

"Leave everything for another time and daylight," advised Mrs. Porter. "We'll gather up Miss Drummond and the little that she absolutely needs at first and get the rest later."

"That's right!" Maizie cried. "She don't need a thing, 's far's that goes; we've got lendings enough."

"Sure! There's that lace-trimmed nightgown I got, Maize! I've been wondering when I'd ever dare wear it! Miss Drummond can wear it first; kinder tame it for me, and maybe I'll get so I'll dare use it," said Taizie, with something like a wink at Rhoda Drummond.

Miss Drummond's feeble protests were swept away. Mrs. Porter supported the girls' claim to take Miss Drummond on the instant, and at last she yielded to the inevitable, and suggested what might be left and what taken with them of her personal belongings. She left her chair and helped them get together what must go, called Mrs. Pailey, who responded so promptly that it suggested her having been exceedingly

near during the visit, bade her landlady good-by and put on her hat and coat surprisingly fast. The excitement of going had called a flush into her white face; already Rhoda Drummond looked as though the first step had been taken toward recovery.

The Coggs girls helped Miss Drummond into the car and disposed her in the rear beside Mrs. Porter. They had brought a great quantity of pillows, which they arranged with surprising carefulness, so that they absolutely forbade the least chance of her being jolted.

Then they got in themselves, Taizie with Elijah, as usual, for in the secret depths of her being Taizie hoped to acquire the knowledge to run the car herself, some day. Maizie sat in a middle seat and leaned over its back with her arms folded, the better to watch the effect of the drive upon the invalid whom they had captured.

They left Mrs. Porter at her own gate, upon which Nancy was swinging, eagerly watching for them, with Rick seated beside her on the post, Bumblebee, her tortoise-shell cat, on the other post and the little dog Fred, at her feet.

Nancy waved her hand, hanging over the gate, when she saw that Miss Drummond was in the car, calling something no one could hear while the engine chugged-chugged.

The twins then saw Nancy skipping beside her

mother up the walk, her arm around her waist and knew that the dear little maid was rejoicing in the success of her plot, while she asked questions about the visit.

"Here's where we get you to ourselves, Miss Drummond," cried Maizie, leaning still farther toward her future companion and friend. "This is a movie: 'The Coggs Twins Swiping a Polisher!'"

And once more Rhoda Drummond surprised herself by laughing, and this time the laugh rang out in the warm June air quite clear and girlishly.

CHAPTER VIII

STUDYING THE CUSTOMS OF THE COUNTRY

THE double twins discovered that their true vocation was nursing.

"Not so much nursing as fussing," Daisy said, developing a sense of accuracy in terms.

Miss Drummond made the same discovery, so ceased to resist, even in thought, the care which the four girls lavished upon her.

They came up in a procession with her meals, four twins, looking so exactly alike that at first Rhoda Drummond had to remind herself that she was not in the least delirious, seeing visions in her brain. The girls each carried a small tray, dividing up the pleasure of serving, each tray holding something for the meal, while Ceescy brought up the rear with the main tray, or sometimes Elijah Riggs' wife came; she was officially the housekeeper, but she enjoyed as much as the twins did trying to get Miss Drummond well.

Between meals there did not a quarter of an hour pass without bringing to Miss Drummond's room a

ruddy-cheeked, ruddy-haired, smiling girl, which one Miss Drummond was not yet sure, with a tid-bit to offer her to eat.

"You seem to think that there's no truth in the stories one reads of slow starvation," Rhoda Drummond laughed. "I believe you think that it sets in five minutes after a meal and is fatal in ten! Or do you think I'm a nestling and you are robin redbreasts foraging for me?"

"Not red *breasts,*" said the twin who had just brought Miss Drummond calves' foot jelly with a few wafers, and who happened to be Daisy. She emphasized the word "breasts" and touched her glowing hair significantly. "It won't hurt you to eat often; we do, and we are as strong as mule— as anything!" Daisy corrected herself.

Already the twins had noticed that one of the points Miss Drummond wanted them to improve was the vigorous inelegance of their similes.

"I'm getting well, dear twin. Please tell me which one you are! I'm so ashamed, but really I cannot distinguish you unless you are all together — and then, often, I'm mistaken!" cried Miss Drummond.

"It's a shame we came by the set, like buttons on a card," said Daisy with earnest contrition. "I'll tell you: Maizie shall pin a blue ribbon on her shoulder; I'll have a lavender one, Taizie shall have a green one, Hazie's must be brown or yellow. You couldn't stand

"'I'M GETTING WELL, DEAR TWIN. PLEASE TELL ME WHICH ONE YOU ARE!'"

looking at us if one of us had a pink or a red one; you'd have real — real apes."

"Real — oh! Relapse!" Miss Drummond struggled so hard not to laugh that she might as well have let herself enjoy Daisy's funny guess at the word.

"We don't mind if you laugh at us; funny things and folks are made to laugh at, ain't — aren't they?" Daisy said, with Coggs good nature, and proving she had already profited by Miss Drummond's corrections of tenses and words. "Maizie and Taizie are going to Boston with Mrs. Porter and Nancy to-morrow. Maybe, while they're gone, you'll learn Hazie and I so you'll know us two apart, anyway."

"Hazie and me," said Miss Drummond.

"Oh, land! I thought 'her and me,' saying me, was awful; that you had to say I, if you wanted to be elegant. How'll a body ever know?" groaned Daisy.

"By practice, listening, not worrying; it'll come right without your knowing how," said Miss Drummond with sympathy. "People who don't know and don't care use *me* wrong; people who don't know and do care use *I* wrong! The best rule for you is to try how it sounds without the other person in your sentence. You would not have said: Know I, so don't say: Know *Hazie* and I; it's not so hard if you keep that easy little rule in mind."

Daisy looked downcast still. "You'd never think, to hear people talk right along, easy and quick, how hard it was to get educated, would you?" she said.

"There are few who are not careless and make mistakes," Miss Drummond laughed this time and touched Daisy's arm with a caressing finger. "Most of us have not been educated to speak correctly; it is caught by being with people who use good English. You, dear twin girls, have not been with people who thought about good English till now. You'll be surprised to discover at the end of a year how you will notice your own mistakes and soon make few."

Taizie rushed into the room at that moment; she carried a plate in one hand and a steaming cup of beef tea in the other, having forgotten a tray.

"You here?" she cried, seeing Daisy. "I thought we'd forgotten to bring Miss Drummond a bite since breakfast and she'd be all weak and folded up! Drink this beef tea, Miss Drummond, quick, while it's hot, though goodness knows, it's hot enough outside us today not to put hot things inside you, too!"

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" cried Miss Drummond, "Daisy has just made me eat jelly and wafers!"

"Good for Daise! But beef tea won't count; it's thin! Drink it, quick! Maizie and — I? — Thought that was right! Maizie and I are the ones that need beef tea; we're weak and washed out when we think of visiting in that elegant house! Ain't it fierce, Miss

Drummond, we didn't find you sooner?" Taizie poured out these words rapidly.

"Isn't it a pity, do you mean?" Miss Drummond faithfully fulfilled her office, which Maizie now called that of Polisher and Hinter. "This was a particularly good time for *me* to find *you,* and earlier would not have had great effect on this visit. Mrs. Lawrence will not misunderstand you; she is a close friend of Mrs. Porter's and that tells us what she is like. Besides, really nice people are not apt to misunderstand."

"Well, whatever we are it's us — we — that's going. There's no more use worrying over the ways we take along than about the red hair we've got to wear there!" Taizie cheered herself with this reflection and ended with a laugh, as usual.

The next afternoon Maizie and Taizie departed to receive an object lesson in presiding over a large establishment.

They were gone three days, days spent by Daisy and Hazie in wondering what they were doing and seeing in Boston and in taking care of Miss Drummond.

On the third day they were to return. Daisy and Hazie made ready to go to the station in the car to meet them with as much excited joy as if the parting had been measured by weeks instead of hours. The affection between these double twins was a delightful thing to see; it never flagged. They were always at

the top notch of mutual admiration and enjoyment, each one of the four as necessary as another to the other three. There never before had been a separation between them for as long as this one; its end called forth excited rapture in the prospect of meeting. Daisy and Hazie appeared in Miss Drummond's room with an armful of magazines before going to the station.

"We don't know whether these are any good," said Daisy, "but we went to the library and asked the lady there what was the best of 'em and she said these four on top were — was? — first-class and the rest was — were? — good second-class, so we went on down to the store and bought all the classes. You read 'em while we're gone."

"Daisy!" cried Miss Drummond. "All those magazines? Haven't you the car still? Are you going to the station in an oxen-drawn wagon? Even if you are, I couldn't read all these before you came back! You dear girls! You are not satisfied till you have conferred favors wholesale, are you?"

"We didn't know how long you'd be reading 'em; we've noticed you read awful fast. Anyhow you may not like the whole bunch," said Daisy, reddening with pleasure and embarrassment under this praise.

"I'll keep the best of the stories to read aloud with you four doublets," said Miss Drummond. "Good stories are best shared."

"You think they'll be good for us; we're on to — we know you!" cried Hazie.

"Now, don't look forward to reading as you would to medicine!" Miss Drummond protested. "Stories are a magic that takes us outside our own lives into new worlds."

"All right," said Hazie. "But we've got taken out a good deal and we don't rightly know yet what world we're in."

Daisy came, with her automobile cap on, bearing the customary tray; it held this time a glass of milk, a saucer of strawberries, thin rice cakes, a small bowl of sugar, a plump little jug of cream.

"You might get hungry while we was — were gone," she said. "Anyhow these are the best berries yet! Miss Drummond, when we think how we used to walk by the grocers' in New York just licking our lips at the strawberries in the windows and go without things so we could buy one box, and that was only last summer, and this summer we go to our telephone, up against the wall in our own palace, and call up the store and tell 'em to send up half a dozen boxes, so Ceescy can make shortcake, and we have all we can eat raw, why it — it makes you feel queer! I'll be blest if it don't make me want to get right down on my knees 'phoning!" Daisy spoke with a quaver in her voice; occasionally these twin girls lost the sense of a perpetual revel that they were enjoying and

were overwhelmed with awe and gratitude at their fate.

Rhoda Drummond arose and put her arm gently over Daisy's shoulder.

"It is wonderful, dear," she said. "I feel quite awed myself to know that I am the one you are going to trust to help fit you to fill the rôle you must play and to prove your gratitude."

Daisy gave her a little squeeze without answering further. "Couldn't you come out on the piazza and be sitting there when Maizie and Taizie drive in?" she asked. "They'd be so glad to see you up and around the house! You feel pretty fine now, don't you?"

"I feel almost as well as ever. Of course I can sit on the piazza; I'd rather. How could one help getting well who had been fed as you've fed me — if it didn't kill her?" Miss Drummond said. "I'll eat those strawberries; they're so enticing they need no appetite. Then I'll get dressed and be on the piazza to welcome Maizie and Taizie. After to-day I'm going to take my place in the household and not be waited on."

"You won't do a thing you don't feel like doing; waiting's the biggest fun yet. So long — I mean good-by. We'll be back, right straight; don't get lonely." Daisy hurried off. Hazie was calling her from the foot of the stairs.

Elijah shared the impatience of these two of the four twins to welcome the travellers. He ran the car down to the station at an unusual speed for cautious Elijah, and had it waiting in front of the station some minutes before the train was due.

Maizie and Taizie came off the train at a point hidden from their twins' view, but when they appeared around the corner Daisy and Hazie fell out of the tonneau and then fell on their twins' necks with entire disregard of the intense enjoyment this greeting gave the newsboys in the square, and the amusement of the girls' fellow passengers.

"Oh, you old Hottentot!" cried Daisy, shaking and hugging Maizie. "You don't get away so easy again!"

"Taize, you — you twin you! It's like a hole full of nothing up at the palace with you out," Hazie was saying, treating her twin to a violent beating with her left fist while she choked her with her right arm.

Then the twins recovered enough to greet Mrs. Porter and Nancy.

"How was it? Did Mrs. Lawrence put you out? Did you learn a lot? Mrs. Porter, we're crazy, but we're not so crazy that we don't know it was awful good of you to take Maize and Taizie down there. We're going to show what we think about it, give us a chance," cried Daisy.

"Come, come!" Doctor Porter protested, holding

Nancy's hand as he waited to get his family under way. "You mad Coggs girls, come down to my house and have it out, but let me take my wife and child to safety now! Get into your triumphal car and be off!"

The twins laughed and obeyed.

"Tell us," ordered Hazie laconically as they started.

"Biggest ever!" returned Taizie with equal brevity. "Perfectly magnificent house, but no brass band to it, you know. Just is elegant and saying nothing. Things sort of match, everything looks as if it had to be just where it was. Say, girls, our house *is* funny; it's so that it ain't — isn't — the right thing. Too flapdoodle! Mrs. Porter got in what she meant to; we saw what it was! And the servants! Well, say! Seem to like to do things for you, but the way they do 'em! Just as soft-footed as cats, and soft voices."

"City cats haven't soft voices at night," observed Hazie. "What else? What about Mrs. Lawrence?"

"Grand!" Maizie took up the theme. "Dresses so quiet, but fine! No fandangles, just a big diamond and her wedding ring. We took off our rings and went like Nancy, plain. Mrs. Lawrence wears lovely clothes, but all still, like. Looks 's if she wore 'em because they belonged to her, but they didn't count; soft silk, no rustle, dandy lace, but nothing screaming at you to look at it. She's the real thing! She was

awful nice to us, talked to us so nice we got over being scared."

"Scared! You! I guess so!" scoffed Daisy.

"Well, I tell you it took the bounce out of Taizie, let alone me," said Maizie earnestly. "Made us feel like a big boot in a box of lace! But we watched Nancy at the table, and she gave us the tip about all the tools to eat with, and Mrs. Lawrence was just as nice as she could be, so we had a fine time. And the things we know now we didn't know before we couldn't exactly tell you, but we know 'em just as much. Mrs. Lawrence loves Mrs. Porter and Nancy 'most to death, you can see that. They were quiet about it, but they showed they couldn't be glad enough they were together. It's pretty nice to see people like that, when they knew each other as girls! That dear little Nancy; she's too sweet. She just goes along her happy way, same down there in that lovely place as she is at home, or with us Bouncing Bets! She's all silk. We've learned heaps, we've had a great time. We're on the right track. When you get rich you've got to amount to a lot more'n if you stayed poor, and it's got to be a nice lot. We'll fix our house over some day so it won't yell at folks going by to see what it cost and we'll learn! — How's Miss Drummond?"

"Fine! Heaps better. She shows us things all the time, pulls out mistakes so they don't hurt coming," said Daisy. "Luck's trotting right along with us;

we've caught a governess that's the very one! Awful easy to love her, too. She's getting real pretty, now she's rested. She's only twenty-six; she told us so. Some day, don't you think we might get nice enough to call her Rhoda without being fresh? It would be so cozy."

"I guess it would be all right," said Maizie. "Mrs. Porter could tell us. I'm wild over Mrs. Porter and the doctor and Nancy. Honest to goodness, I don't believe you could find another three like them, man, woman and child, anywhere from Dan to beer server."

"That ain't — isn't the right way to say that, Maizie," said Hazie. "I know it isn't, but I don't know what is; not beer server! Sure, there isn't a family like the Porters. And nice to us; well! Doctor Porter's dying to get a hospital built here; they're going to get up a pay giant to raise money for it, a pay giant of Chagford history."

"Pageant, Haze," Daisy corrected her. "I got that word right from Miss Drummond. I was wondering if the doctor wouldn't like us to hand over some of the land we bought to put the hospital on? We don't need a whole county around our house."

"'Twould be fine for it, right close to the lake," said Maizie, just as ready to disregard their side of the land value as her twin was. "Maybe he'd let us give it to the hospital. It would be nice if we could please him some way, when he's so good to us; they

all are! My, but this breeze around the lake is great! If you don't believe it was hot down there in Boston you're missing a chance to believe what's so! The wind turned east last night and crisped us up some; before that we was — were — simply wilted like lettuce that's laid behind the stove."

"There's Miss Drummond, sitting out!" cried Taizie springing to her feet.

"Set still, Miss Taizie; or you might be laying out," warned Elijah, putting a hand on Taizie's arm. "In a car, like a boat, there's no manner of use jumping up and being risky."

"We planned that!" cried Daisy with as much pride as if it had been a complicated plot. "We thought it would be nice to have her out there when you came, so 't you'd see right off she's getting well."

Miss Drummond waved one of her magazines, the only one she had brought down-stairs, at the arrivals. She was surprised and pleased to find herself really thrilled by the sight of two more Coggs twins coming home. It was a delight to know that she was fond of these girls, though who could help being? They were so unselfish, so affectionate, so kindly impulsive and so loyal; truly they were irresistible. It would be a hard heart, thought Miss Drummond, that did not warm to them who had nursed her so devotedly, racking their brains and wearying their feet to find and bring her anything that might help her. She was

sure the double twins were fond of her. How good it was that mutual affection was to be the basis of their relation to one another!

"Hullo, Miss Drummond!" called Maizie, beaming delightedly. "Awful glad you're out!"

"Awful glad to see you, too, and to get home," Taizie added, running up the steps and catching Miss Drummond in one of her violent embraces.

Maizie dropped a bunch of long-stemmed roses which she carried into Miss Drummond's hand. "Brought them just for you, but I've got other things for all you children, and I got us some thin white dresses, more like what Mrs. Lawrence would like; not so fussed up, Daisy and Hazie. I've got something for everybody, bought another trunk; it's on the way up, by express. Let's get cool and clean, Taizie, and — supper early, Daisy? We've got some appetite, believe me! Oh, Miss Drummond, don't mind! It's kind of upsetting to come home! I mean, we're very hungry, really."

Miss Drummond laughed. "I'm not going to devour you, if you slip into slang, Maizie. These are extenuating circumstances! Don't you think you girls could call me Rhoda? I'm not old, only eleven years older than the elder pair of you. Please say Rhoda!"

"How's that?" Maizie demanded of her twin. "Funny, we spoke about it coming up in the car! Daisy wondered if we'd ever be let — wrong? If we

ever might call you Rhoda; she said she'd like to. So would I. And here you are telling us to right off! Seems 's if we did about what we wanted to, all around, now!"

"We'll go get dressed for supper; will you wait here — Rhoda?" asked Daisy.

"Yes, Daisy dear, I'd like to," Rhoda answered with a smile acknowledging the milestone they had just passed on the road to closer intimacy. "Did you notice on the way up what a glorious sunset we had? There'll be a beautiful afterglow."

"Too busy with gas to see sunset!" laughed Taizie. "All right, Rhoda; you wait here for the afterglow, while the rest of us get spruced up."

The double twins hurried away leaving Rhoda Drummond happy. She was glad to hear her name again, for, like all lonely people, she longed for her own name, and that "rest of us," that Taizie had said, that reckoned her as one of the helter-skelter family, gave her a comfortable sense of belonging to some one.

Maizie and Taizie's new trunk appeared while they were all at supper, in the last splendor of the gorgeous afterglow which Rhoda had promised them.

Afterward it was opened. Daisy and Hazie were greatly pleased with their soft white silk mulls, simply made, with no trimming but delicate, fine lace.

"You know those white lace-trimmed things we

bought our first trip look like heads of cauliflower," remarked Taizie. "Once you see straight, you don't like fussy diddle things." Which remark proved how fast the twins were moving in the direction of taste, for those first purchases were not two months old.

Rhoda's gift was an organdie that looked as if it had been lifted right out of the bandbox of some Colonial dame.

"We didn't pick that out," Maizie confessed. "We got Mrs. Porter to do it for us. She said that material and the pale lavender pattern would just suit Rhoda's pale face and dark eyes; she said she was an old-fashioned girl — type, I think she called it, like printing."

"I love that gown!" Rhoda declared looking more girlish than the twins had seen her. "But you mustn't, dear twins, buy such gifts for me, you know!"

"Why not?" demanded Maizie, troubled in a moment. Her new lessons were so puzzling to her that she really feared that Rhoda meant she had broken some convention. "They are selling everything cheap, now it's late in June. And why is it wrong to get you something, when I do for Daisy and Hazie, even for the help?"

"I didn't mean that, dear; I meant you are too good to me," Rhoda quickly explained.

"Oh, is that all!" cried Maizie, relieved. "Then

I dare show you the little amethyst pin that goes with the dress! We just love to spend; so would you, if you hadn't ever bought a toothpick for any one, because you hadn't the price! I've got something for every single one I love here — and some I don't more'n like. Say, Daisy, we got a set of dishes for Lora's mother. She wanted it bad. And we picked out a Morris chair for Mrs. Deacon, and we bought Tommy Giddings the tool chest he was crying for. We didn't know what on earth to buy Doctor Porter, but we pitched on a lovely old set of books. The storekeeper said they was — were — lovely; they look kind of shabby. They've got the queerest name! Treed calf with tools! What do you think of that?"

"Tree calf and tooled, Maizie," laughed Rhoda. "That's a beautiful leather with branching marks, like a tree, and the edges are tooled, stamped with a narrow design."

"That's what they are!" Maizie affirmed, much pleased. "All right, are they? Good! We bought a book for Miss Belinda Allaire and a cute little foot pillow for her sister. Wait till you see the neglected gown we struck for Grandma Emerson!"

"Isn't it a negligée, Maizie?" suggested Rhoda.

Maizie nodded hard. "Still I'm getting there — learning," she said.

"Let's leave everything just as it is and get out on the piazza," said Taizie. "Nobody'll bother the trunk

and it's too nice to light the gas to clear up! Come on out. It won't hurt you, will it, Rhoda?"

"Not a bit; tiredness was my only complaint, and utter discouragement, because I was at the end of my purse and of my wits, too, all alone. Now I am useful, or trying to be, and happy, with four dear girls, all alike, to look after me and to be looked after, I am almost perfectly well! Night air can't harm a person who was sick from discouragement!"

Rhoda answered so gaily that she received another hug, this time from Hazie.

Out on the piazza the night was found so beautiful that it subdued the high spirits of the double twins. Maizie and Taizie were a little tired, but it was chiefly the golden beauty of the night that quieted their rattling tongues.

The piazza of "Foster's Folly" had not been part of the mistakes which had been made in building the house. It was broad, a semi-circular front, with straight, plain supporting columns. It gave silver glimpses of the lake through the glorious trees on the lawn and bordering the pretty sheet of water. It allowed ample room for piazza couches and commodious chairs, with no lack of space to swing and rock and walk about in.

"No, don't make me lie down to-night," protested Rhoda. "I want to sit in the very front row of the balcony to look at this scene to-night."

She drew her chair to the centre of the circular sweep of the piazza front and sank into it, with a breath of content.

The double twins drew four chairs around her and dropped into them with a similar sigh of content.

"Pretty nice," said Hazie softly.

The moon, half grown to its fulness, shone just below the treetops. Occasionally a small night bird uttered a clear, moving note; over beyond, by the lake, the whippoorwills sang deliriously, each one unable to yield superior power to his rival. All around the house the insect orchestra industriously accompanied them, an ideal accompaniment, unfailing, yet unobtrusive.

"It's nicer than nice!" said Maizie. "Miss — Rhoda, why do you suppose it's us?"

It was too lovely a night to correct English. Rhoda asked:

"You who have been given so much and not some one else, Maizie?"

"That's it. There's lots of girls in those stuffy places in New York, where we used to live — and here we are! Even a house like Mrs. Lawrence's isn't a patch on this piazza and this cool breeze, and all the things we hear zizzing and singing! And those packed tenements! Oh, say, why is it us?" Maizie's voice sharpened.

"Some day we will read a poem that tells of a

regiment's charge into certain death, because it was ordered to go. The poem says:

"'Theirs not to question why,
Theirs but to do —and die.'

We never shall know why we are sent into joy or sorrow, Maizie dear. All we have to do is to obey orders and do our best, wherever we have to go. But I can guess that it is you who are here, so blessed, because you are going to use your blessings to bless others — as you do for me, dear," Rhoda answered gently.

"Well, we'll try, we'll honest try," said Maizie.

"It won't be hard," said Hazie. "All we've got to do is to remember how we used to have it. I guess people forget that they've got to pay back when they've got a lot, don't you?"

"I think we all forget our debts, when we are not good; yes, dear Hazie," said Rhoda.

CHAPTER IX

FAILURE AND SUCCESS

THERE were other topics of conversation in Chagford that summer besides the sale of "Foster's Folly" and its purchase by such a surprising plural owner as four girls all alike and all under sixteen years of life, girls, too, who, as Mrs. Evans, the grocer's wife said, "had come up from the ranks."

Mrs. Evans was always plaintive and elegant. Rick teasingly told the twins that any one coming up from the ranks had to be careful not to bring the rankness up with them.

There was to be a pageant of Chagford's history to raise money to build a hospital for the united Chagfords, a project long nearest to Doctor Porter's heart of all his many large-visioned plans.

Miss Belinda Allaire was the chief mover in the arrangements for the pageant.

Chagford's history was not greatly different from the history of other Massachusetts towns. She had begun in the seventeenth century, a little clearing in

the wilderness, guarded by a blockhouse from the probable attacks of surrounding savages. She had grown into a prosperous village of farms and small shops till the Revolution had given her full share of gallant men and devoted women to the cause of Independence, had grown rapidly through the years when the whole country was growing and had made an offshoot in Chagford Falls, the mill town called into being by new industries. The Civil War had wrung Chagford's heart and cost her best blood; she had had her station of "the Underground Railroad," that helped escaping slaves to Canada, and had sent her sons, and her daughters' happiness with them, to the war. Since then Chagford had done nothing in particular, but had done it well; quietly growing, making her schools as good as she could, her library excellent, resolutely, somewhat stiffly, upholding her traditions and, to a creditable degree, fulfilling her ideals.

Miss Allaire found good material here for a pageant; she pressed into the service all the available people in all the Chagfords. Nancy Porter was to be Takatelka, the Indian girl who, so tradition said, had saved the future Chagford, its fate being bound up in the lives of the settlers, by coming from her Indian village to bring healing herbs, known to her race, to the first white men in the forest-clearing when they lay ill unto death.

Miss Allaire had come to ask Maizie, Daisy, Taizie

and Hazie to represent Religion, Learning, the Law and Industry. Her idea was to have the four figures in classic drapery standing, one on each corner of a float, upholding a frame which should support the triangle, symbol of the three Chagfords-in-one, conveying the thought that the civilization and prosperity of the Chagfords were founded upon religion, law, learning and industry.

Taizie Coggs laughed when she heard the suggestion, throwing herself backward with her customary movement of abandoning herself to mirth.

"Oh, Miss Allaire," she cried, "don't think I'm fre— impudent, laughing like that, but it struck me so funny! Now, honest, wouldn't the Coggs twins be great dressed up to be things like that? We've got to be something kind of in the circus line; we'd queer everything being laws and learnings and works, and — my goodness! Religion!"

"That's right, Miss Allaire; we would," Maizie and Daisy confirmed her.

"We'd be — now what was that you said, Rhoda, the other day and I made you clear it up? Something that is all out of gear with the way things ought to be? Not an animal; something that sounds like that, though," Hazie said.

"An anomaly," Rhoda told her, and she and Miss Allaire laughed this time.

"I do believe you are right, twins," Miss Allaire

said, "but it seemed like wasting an opportunity not to use you, all four alike, as statues on the corners of a float. You are adapted to representing something more lively, something as modern as can be — but what?"

"We don't know any history to choose from," said Maizie. "Is there anything funny in it?"

"Nothing funny about history — unless that it is so free from amusing things!" said Rhoda. "I know! Let these doublets represent the girls of various races who have come to work in the Chagford Falls mills! One could be a Swede, another Irish, another French Canadian, another German — "

"That's it!" cried three twins at the same instant.

"Dress up like those girls in the old country and dance and fool all the way, jigs and jiggings! You're great, Rhoda!" Maizie said in solo.

This was how it happened that when the pageant was given the Coggs girls were the only comedians in the procession.

There were two parts of the pageant. The pageant proper, the tableaux representing Chagford's history, was given in the afternoon. On the preceding evening there was a Water Revel, as Louise Willis had christened it, a series of groups on floats resting on small boats, shown on the lake by electric light.

Nancy Porter led the water procession on a small boat, its seats covered with a flat flooring of boards.

She represented "the Spirit of Chagford," leading the way for all that had befallen the town since its beginning. Following her on the succession of floats came beautifully costumed and posed living pictures of characters in the varied garb of the nearly four centuries which had passed over Chagford.

Many of the costumes were veritable survivals of the periods to which they belonged, heirlooms in Chagford families.

The Coggs floats came at the end of the long procession, a procession so long that its first end was three-quarters around the lake when the last end came along, although the pretty body of water wound in and out its shores, increasing its length to many times its diameter.

There were two Coggs floats, a pair of twins on each. Maizie, costumed as a German peasant girl, in short skirts, black bodice, funny cap and long light braids, was with Taizie as the Irish colleen, while Daisy, in the most picturesque costume of the four, was a Swedish peasant, with Hazie as a French Canadian girl.

All along the slow progress these two pairs of representatives of immigration to the Chagford Falls mills frolicked and danced and sang and carried out their conception of their rôles with unflagging zest and real talent. They were applauded at every foot of their passing and the more the applause rang out

the wilder grew the twins' spirits, the livelier they danced, the quicker flew their sallies of retort to the nonsense shouted to them from the banks of the lake, the gayer rang their songs — and they apparently had an endless repertory of popular, gay airs, echoes from their New York life.

"How'd you happen to come to the mills?" called some one, evidently acquainted with the story of Peter Debbs' grandchildren having sought employment in his mills before he had admitted their kinship.

"Sure who's a better right?" Taizie, in her character of Irish immigrant, called back, her brogue an honor to her memory and her skill in imitating. "It's me Granddad Debbs that's ownin' 'um! Faith, 'twas ould Pether called me over the seas to 'um. 'Come, me darlin',' says he, 'come till I hold ye off where I can't be lookin' at you,' says he. 'I won't take a look at ye,' says he, 'for fear I'd see double, thin!' He wanted me that bad I had to come to 'um."

Taizie ended this chatter, which she made perfectly audible across the water, with a wink that took the crowd along the bank into her confidence and began to dance a bit of jig, singing:

"I hear you calling me," at a most improperly rapid tempo.

All Chagford knew the Coggs' story. The people who heard this thrust at the twins' grandfather's resolution to keep his grandchildren at a distance, laughed

and applauded, enjoying the satire. But Taizie had no idea of satire; it struck her as a funny thing to say and she said it, merely because she was bubbling over with the excitement of the pageant, the electric lights, the bands, the crowds, the chance to play as any lively girl of fourteen would like to play.

As luck would have it, however, Peter Debbs was seated precisely at that point on the curving lake shore opposite to which Taizie had been halted a moment while she poked fun at him. He turned an alarming color, pursed his lips out, snorted, but when a timid lady near him ventured to say: "The child is only treating it as a joke; she does not mean it as ridicule, exactly, Mr. Debbs. She has no idea you are hearing her. They are not much more than children and what clever ones! They are delightfully unspoiled and funny. You must be proud of them!" old Peter Debbs swung himself around in his seat, planting his back directly toward Taizie's defender.

"Proud of 'em! Proud of wild, impudent — impudent!" he stammered wrathfully. "Indeed, ma'm, you must think I've no sense, because they're my grandchildren and they're what they are! But I'm not so feeble-minded as to be proud of four simpletons, all alike! I've given them money enough to make them tired soon of living where it's so quiet; they'll soon enough take themselves off and go to rack and ruin spending it, and that's comforting me."

"Oh," said Taizie's defender to her husband, seeing how worse than useless it was to attempt to placate old Peter, "Oh, what an unnatural, dreadful old man he is! So to resent a young thing's nonsense, to feel so unkindly to his own daughter's children!"

It happened that there was a girl sitting near old Peter Debbs who worked in his mills. She had formed a speaking acquaintance with the four twins during their brief employment there and had disliked them, partly because they were new hands, partly because they seemed so unreasonably jolly, partly because they formed a friendship with Lora Bruce and not with her, chiefly because she had a jealous temper, attuned to dislike rather than liking.

While the double twins' two floats were bearing them on, blissfully enjoying their applause and all the fun they were getting and giving, unconscious that their grandfather had heard Taizie's madcap speech, which they had forgotten as soon as it was uttered, this Lizzie Horn was planning what she told herself would be "a good joke on the stuck-up Coggses."

The double twins floated home on waves of joy that night, borne along as their floats had been borne by the waters of the lake. It was good, unspeakably blissful, to see every face smiling at them, to feel the kindly pride that Chagford was beginning to take in these four funny, youthful heroines of romance. No one could have been farther from deserving Lizzie

Horn's accusation of airiness than the double twins. Poor or rich, friendless or liked, they were always their simple selves, having just as good a time as they possibly could and wanting every one else to share it, getting every bit that there was in it out of every opportunity that came to them to be happy. More than that, they went home so happy that they immediately began to plan how to give away to Chagford for its hospital many of the beautiful acres which they had bought beside the lake.

"Sweet-natured, honest, wholesome girls!" Doctor Porter pronounced them heartily, discussing the Coggs twins on his way home with his wife and Nancy. "They are going to make valuable women. Chagford will find herself greatly benefited by them in years to come — clever, too, they are bright and not in the least self-conscious."

Thus the great man — for Doctor Porter was really a great man — appraised the twins, while envious, dull Lizzie Horn condemned them, proving anew that a narrow lens cannot reveal the beauty of a large object.

Two days after the pageant a letter arrived at "the palace," as the double twins nicknamed their big house, pending the discovery of a name that it should bear. Letters were not frequent at the house. Rhoda had been too ill and disheartened to keep up her correspondence; the twins had no acquaintances in their

old life to whom writing a letter not absolutely required for a tremendous reason would not have seemed like the maddest folly. Notes were beginning to arrive from Chagford people, but not yet commonly.

Maizie took up the letter of that morning and scanned it closely.

"It's from Chagford Falls," she announced. "Not Lora, not Tommy Giddings, not Mrs. Deacon; I don't know who it's from, kind of sprawly handwriting, looks as if it might stay on this envelope or might run over on to any other."

Rhoda laughed; Maizie's characterizations were always original.

"Don't you suppose the letter is signed?" Rhoda hinted.

"Apply within," Maizie said, nodding at her and acting on the hint.

She read the letter, which was not long, several times. Her face expressed such blank amazement, followed by a flushed excitement, that the other three twins protested at being kept in the dark.

"Read it out, Maize!" cried Daisy. "It's sure to be ours as much as yours. Maybe it's meant for one of us others; no one could tell which one they'd seen."

"Sure; it's for all of us," said Maizie, looking up

with a variety of tints and expressions on her face. "What do you think! From Peter Debbs! From grandfather!"

"Never!" cried the other three girls together. "What's up?" added Taizie alone.

"My dear Grandchildren:—" Maizie read by way of replying. "I was pleased by what you done" —"Ought to be did, oughtn't it, Rhoda? But he isn't educated either," Maizie paused to comment — "at the entertainment the other night. I am sorry I have not let you come to see me. Grandfathers ought to get acquainted with their granddaughters. Please come to see me as soon as you can. If I happen to forget what brings you, just say you come because I sent for you. I'm awful forgetful. Yours truly — with love — Grandfather Peter Debbs."

"Well — what — do — you — know — about — that!" exclaimed Hazie, overwhelmed, while the other two stared without a word.

"Isn't it good!" cried Rhoda, greatly pleased.

"It's fine!" Maizie declared emphatically. "I'm glad it's all happened this way. I've been thinking it was a shame for us to take his money — though he ought to look out for us — and not have him get a bit of good of us. Stands to reason an old man, all alone, would get a lot out of a bunch of jolly kids like us, if only he made up his mind to take it. Of course we'd rather be let alone to go as you please, but it'd be

sort of good to pay him back some of it. I dread like anything to go there, but I'm glad he's sent for us."

"Well, Maize," said candid Taizie, "that's all right to feel like that, but I'm willing to own up I could get along fine all my days without any old man to tie us up. But I'll do my part, straight and fair, and try to like it. Being real grand and noble isn't my long suit; having free fun is. Still, maybe when I see our grandfather getting chippered up from us, perhaps I'll swallow my dose and lick my lips and ask for more."

"Taizie always says what the rest think, but can't come right out with," said Daisy. "It's nice to be as we are, just as free as hoptoads in the garden, but we won't be sorry to let Peter Debbs know we're thankful we have a garden, if we can do anything nice for him."

Hazie looked thoughtful. "Maizie meant being glad in your head though you may not feel jumpy-hearted; I see! We'll all be like that when we get at it," she said.

Rhoda Drummond laughed and laughed. She laughed so much and so heartily that it was no wonder that she gained strength and was growing prettier and brighter-eyed every day.

"When shall you go to see your grandfather?" she asked.

"The sooner the better, more polite, isn't it?" said Maizie. "To-day?"

"I would. You won't ask me to go with you? I'm willing to go, but it would be better to go without me," Rhoda advised.

"We'd better go all by our little Coggs selves," said Daisy. "And walk. We might go in the car part way, 'cause it's pretty far, but leave it somewhere and go on foot, like — I don't know — not as if we were showing off."

"That's it, Daisy! And not dress up too much, look nice, but not — "

"Gaudy," Taizie cut in. "Right after lunch we'll start, then. We must get Ceescy to give us hearty stand-bys! True's I live, I dread going like ginger! If he's crabbed we'll get scared, and if he's grandfathery won't we feel silly, not knowing him and all!"

After lunch the double twins made ready for their visit. They could not be blamed for feeling — as Daisy said they did — nervous. It was a great step to be going to meet their grandfather, their one living relative, and the twins minded it much more than they would have if they had met him when they first came to Chagford, for in this time they had awakened to a sense of many things which they had not then known. They made a simple, girlish toilet, all four similarly clad in one of the sheer white gowns which Maizie

and Taizie had been taught to select during their visit to Mrs. Lawrence in Boston.

Elijah took them down past the lake and over to Chagford Falls. Rhoda went with them as far as Grandma Emerson's, but they proceeded on their way alone.

Leaving Elijah and the car, they gathered up their delicate white draperies and picked their way daintily through the streets which in Chagford Falls were always more dusty than in old shady Chagford proper.

Peter Debbs lived in a small house with a housekeeper and her one assistant to look after him. He had begun life a poor man and the preferences of his first formed tastes clung to him. Acquiring great wealth had not changed his determination to "live comfortable and no bother," as he put it.

Consequently when the four grandchildren, who were all that he had left of what may best make life worth living, duties, ties, kindred, stood upon his doorstep and twisted the queer little cast iron knob of the bell that sounded like an alarm clock and was fastened in the middle panel of the door, it was Peter Debbs himself whom they aroused from a nap and summoned to his feet to open the door.

Peter Debbs was decidedly grumpy and grouchy by nature, increasing years and an existence without affection or object had not sweetened him, being awakened from a nap in the warmest part of a very warm

"HE STOOD SILENT, SCOWLING HORRIBLY."

afternoon made nothing better. Old Peter opened the door — which stuck irritatingly — with a growl in his throat.

The growl died there, choking him. He stood silent, scowling horribly, at the four terrified, flaming young faces before him.

Neither host nor guests spoke. One was too furious to speak, the others too frightened.

"Who're you? Don't tell me! I don't want to know. What brings you — how dare you come here? I told that shyster lawyer from New York what I'd do, and to keep you off from me. I won't do another thing for you; you've got enough. Don't you dare come round my house, not once," Old Peter managed to say at last, his face so purple that the twins began to forget their original fear in the more pressing one that he might topple over before them, dead of apoplexy.

"We didn't come wanting any more," cried Taizie, recovering sufficiently to defend the Coggs twins, as usual first of them to find her tongue. "We've got a great deal more'n we need. Don't you get so excited; what makes you? It'll hurt you. We never'd thought of coming if you hadn't written and told us to. Take us easy and don't get so upset, Grandfather Debbs."

Taizie spoke in all honesty of purpose, to soothe her grandfather, but her bidding him not excite him-

self seemed to have a most dismayingly contrary effect. The veins stood out in his face and he sputtered, striving vainly after speech. Evidently he was a most fearfully irascible old man. The twins stared at him, badly frightened, but no less amazed that he should send for them and then take their coming in this way.

Hazie pulled Maizie's sleeve. "Let's go," she whispered.

"What — what do you mean by saying I wrote you, you saucy girl?" he shouted in a sort of explosion. "How dare you tell me I wrote you, to my face, to my face! Which one of you made fun of me on the lake the other night? To my face, too! Was it you? Bid you come to me! And you dare tell me I wrote you? Be off! What have I ever done to deserve four dancing, impudent grandchildren, all alike? I'll send for you fast enough, when I want you! The brazen story! I suppose you think this is funny! Take yourselves off, and leave me in peace. If ever I should have wanted you this would settle it."

"But you did write us!" cried Maizie, Daisy and Hazie in one breath the instant he paused. "You told us to remind you of your letter in case you forgot, because you were forgetful. Here's the letter," Maizie continued, no longer afraid because she was too amazed to feel any consciousness of herself.

Old Peter Debbs thrust the letter, which Maizie

held out to him, away with a furious gesture. "I won't look at it. There's nothing to see! I never wrote it! Be off!" he shouted.

The double twins turned and fled. There was no doubt about it; their grandfather was a madman. They had no desire, before they reached this conclusion, to linger on his steps, facing his incomprehensible wrath, but flight from an old man who was not sane became a pressing duty. The four girls went down the street as fast as their feet would carry them, not wasting a breath on voicing the astonishment that arose above all other feelings in regard to this visit.

"Why on foot? Why so fleet of foot?" called a voice behind them.

They paused and turned to see Doctor Porter driving steady old Tonic in the same direction in which they were going.

"Oh, Doctor Porter!" cried Maizie. "I guess you ought to go back and see Grandfather Debbs. He wrote us and told us to come and see him and, goodness knows, we didn't want to go, but we went and he carried on something awful, got so purple he looked like a poor old plum, and he is — plum crazy! He yelled at us, told us to be off, and said he never wrote us! Here's his letter! He's just as crazy as the craziest quilt you ever saw. Hadn't you better see him?"

"I wish I could take you home," said Doctor Porter.

"The car's down here, with Elijah; we left it," said Taizie.

"Pile yourselves into the buggy somehow, one on another's lap, one in the middle, one on the floor and I'll take you to your car. Let me see that letter," said the doctor.

The twins gladly packed themselves into the buggy, as Doctor Porter bade them, feeling him a rock in a desert land. Maizie offered the letter they had received for his inspection.

The doctor read it with raised eyebrows. He folded it and returned it to Maizie with a smile.

"I don't wonder the old man was considerably surprised by your visit, nor that he doubted your truthfulness. I think he never saw this letter, my dears," he said.

"But who —" began Daisy.

"A practical joke, played by some one who enjoys mischief, or else who has a grudge against you, or old Peter," said the doctor. "I'll make a point of explaining to him that I saw the letter and can testify to your having been deceived. I think I can prevent its doing you harm with him. Queer affair, however! Of course you don't know your grandfather; if you knew him you'd know that letter was not his. Put the unpleasant adventure out of your minds for a while. Aren't we Chagfordians immensely proud of the net result of our pageant?"

"Yes, we are," said Taizie. "That's another thing. Grandfather Peter Debbs must have heard what I said about how my grandfather called me over from Ireland, wanting so bad to see me — I was the Irish emigrant girl, you know. How'd I know he was 'round? Anyhow, it was all fun!"

"Perhaps that suggested the letter to some one," said Doctor Porter, hitting the nail on the head. "It's a mistake to come too near to facts in jest, Taizie, even to a twist of them. But we are to have a hospital, doublets! That's the predominant thought in my mind to-day!"

"Doctor Porter, won't you please let us give some land for it?" said Maizie, speaking in a voice so subdued, with a manner so meek that one might have thought she was confessing a wrong, instead of pleading to be allowed to do a generous deed. The twins were always much embarrassed if they were suspected of good actions.

"Up at the upper end of the lake it's real nice, kind of higher and sunny — and shady, too. We've been talking about it. Rhoda thinks it'll be all right, if we want to, and we do. We'll have fifty acres more'n we want. We got Mr. Ri— Elijah — to measure off what that would be and we don't need it one bit. Will you make them take it, Doctor, dear? And don't say much, don't let them make a fuss; it isn't as if it would do us any good."

The smile on Doctor Porter's lips, the warm light in the eyes that he bent upon Maizie from beneath the brows which the twins called "knobby," were as eloquent of gratitude as the strongest vote of thanks could have been.

"Dear little doublets," said the good doctor, "you know, without my telling you, that if the land were given there not only would be a great deal more money in hand to build with, but the work could begin at once. It would be a good deed — in a double sense — giving that deed for land, twin Coggs girls! But it is my bounden duty to tell you that the land is increasing in value along the lake faster than in any other part of Chagford and that while you think now that such a generous gift will not count greatly, one of these days you may wish that you had not curtailed your property. You may each wish to have a home of your own some day, my dears, and regret that you have given away the only land available along the lake."

"Then we'll buy it somewhere else, along the post office, on Main Street!" laughed Maizie. "What'll we care? Besides, we don't have to have four homes unless we marry, and we don't want to break ourselves up marrying; it's so nice to be four unmarried maiden twin ladies! If we did get so silly as to be willing to separate, why then I think the land ought to be brought along with the husband. So the Chagford Hospital

gets fifty acres to be built on from your 'ladies of the lake,' Doctor Porter."

"In common gratitude they should be all Chagford's — all three Chagfords', especially all sick and suffering Chagford's — 'ladies of the lake' as well as mine," said the doctor. He laid a hand on Maizie's shoulder and guided Tonic into the street where Hazie said that Elijah waited with the car.

"Just a few weeks ago, five months, for you came here in the spring and this is September, no one in Chagford knew more of you than that you were four rosy, ruddy-haired, rather frowzy girls, possible heroines of an unusual story, likable, but not particularly important little townswomen. And already you are part of Chagford's life, improved more than you can gauge, getting known and loved and respected; more than that, you are to be public benefactors! Isn't that a wonderful record for the first half year?" The doctor turned Tonic to allow the twins to get out of the twin-full buggy and smiled as he spoke, but he meant what he said seriously.

The Coggs girls went happily toward their waiting car, waving their hands back to the beloved doctor. He was right! It *was* a record for less than half a year! They were accomplishing their end, growing up into their place, though Peter Debbs did drive them from him furiously. They went home happy, in spite of the disastrous visit and their hurt pride.

CHAPTER X

THE MILLS FIRE

THE Coggs twins grew older girlishly. They did not want to grow up, but if they had wanted to they would hardly have known how to go about it; they were too light-hearted to be anything but youthful, for the essence of growing up seems to be to lose the ability to play.

Yet the days slipping over them into months were leaving their impress on the four merry girls, a succession of small impressions that, taken together, were stamping them as fit to pass current among those things and people to which their Grandfather Debbs' wealth admitted them.

When Maizie and Daisy were eighteen, and Taizie and Hazie seventeen, they had grown into most attractive girls. No amount of effort could ever make them conventional; no one who loved them wanted them made so.

They had learned to speak, in the main, correctly, to behave as "nice girls" behaved, but they were breezy, impetuous, outspoken, always themselves, un-

like any one else. Chagford had learned to call them "original," and to take great pride in their sayings and doings. All three Chagford towns benefited by their generosity and loved them. In the three years that they had lived in Chagford the Coggs twins had become one of the institutions of their adopted home.

Rhoda Drummond was not only invaluable to them; she had grown very dear to them. In turn the double twins were as dear to Rhoda as younger sisters could have been. Life in "the palace," as the twins called their big lakeside house, was wonderfully pleasant; the attitude of all four Coggs girls toward growing up was defensive — they feared lest some day might bring a change in their present happiness. They were good-looking girls, wholesome "sonsy," with their ruddy hair always flying, giving the effect of faces seen through sun rays, much as one sees gnats in the sun. Their complexions were fresh and clear, the color always coming and going under the brilliant white of their skin; their eyes were bright and laughing, their lips almost always parted in a smile that was the embodiment of good nature and which revealed white, even, strong teeth that increased their effect of abounding health. They dressed well, quietly now, in well-chosen, fine materials and colors, yet somehow they contrived to produce the effect of being always a trifle over-dressed.

The Coggs twins were over-emphatic in every direction, but those who loved them would not willingly have given up the least of their exaggerations, and most people loved the girls who were, like Kim, "friends to all the world."

Hazie had developed into the quietest one of the four, quiet, however, only by comparison. She cared to read; it was mainly due to her that books, bought to use and form acquaintance with them, began to fill the empty library shelves of "the palace." Maizie studied; she had proved ambitious to learn and she, also, liked to read. Daisy was the most domestic one of the quartette, while Taizie's talents, as she herself truthfully said, "ran to whooping it up." Taizie learned things through her pores; she imitated, was quick-witted, so was sure to get on, but she managed to fill every hour of her day with about ninety seconds of fun, and to dodge work.

The twins had never again made an attempt to be dutiful grandchildren after their one, disastrous visit to Peter Debbs. The old man did not alter his decision to provide for the twins without seeing them and the girls had settled down gratefully to the freedom this allowed them, without conscience-pricks as to neglected duties.

The writer of the letter which had purported to come from their grandfather was never discovered. The double twins gave it no thought after a day or

two, and now the adventure was three years in the past.

Nancy Porter had been given a sitting-room as her sixteenth birthday present. Her father had built out and enlarged a small room in the Porter house for Nancy's own private use. It was to be furnished with genuine old furniture, and the doctor's patients had begged to be allowed to contribute this from their stores of heirlooms. Chagford was one of the old mahogany towns. The room had not been finished in time for Nancy to take possession in October, on her birthday, but now, in late November, it was ready for her and the twins had been asked down to a funny housewarming.

"It's really a reception to the new-old furniture, because we are going to see it moved in. Most people fix up their rooms and then ask people to see them; Nancy knows what fun it is to watch things unwrapped, so she does it this way," said Hazie.

"Let's look at the rug once more," suggested Taizie. "Then roll it up for good."

The Coggs girls had decided upon a rug as their contribution to Nancy's room. Not only did they love sweet Nancy more than any and all other of the Chagford girls, but they were profoundly grateful to her for all the countless benefits Nancy had quietly conferred upon them from the first, benefits which every day of their growing understanding of their

world made them appreciate more. Nancy's word was law, her influence paramount with all the girls in Chagford best worth knowing. When she constituted herself the Coggs twins' friend she opened the way to the friendship of all the other Chagford girls. In numberless ways she had put herself unobtrusively between the twins and ridicule while they were still inexperienced. The twins would have gone through fire and water for Nancy with cheerful courage.

As to Doctor Porter and Mrs. Porter, the Coggs girls felt that they could not live long enough, nor feel and do enough to prove their loving gratitude to them both.

"Taizie, you've looked at that rug till I'm pretty sure it's thin!" cried Daisy. But she was on her feet as she spoke, more than ready to see the rug once more.

"We don't club together and pay two thousand dollars for a present every day," said Maizie. "I never was so surprised in my life as I was when I was told that rug's price, but I see now why it is so costly and why it is beautiful. I do hope it's right!"

"If you and Taizie had picked it out alone, it might be a sell, as well as a sale, but as long as Mrs. Lawrence took you to the best dealer in Boston and helped you pick it out, it can't be wrong. Mrs. Porter will like it, if she knows Mrs. Lawrence selected it," said Hazie.

They all repaired to the drawing-room where the great rug lay spread out, its soft old colors and exquisite texture mercifully obliterating the carpet which the Coggs girls had acquired with the house.

"Rhoda!" called Daisy going to the door. "Rhoda, come down! We're looking at the rug again."

Rhoda came, holding her fluttering kimono together as she ran. She looked five years younger than she had three years before, when Nancy had brought her and the twins together, a pretty, graceful, charming young woman.

"I was just getting dressed for the party," she said. "Anything wrong? You haven't discovered a defect in the rug, have you?"

"No, indeed. Just liking it better and wanted you to help us do it," laughed Maizie.

"We're going to roll it up to take to Nancy now. Isn't it nice?"

"It's much more than nice," said Rhoda, with a smile that gently reminded the twins how many times she had made the same answer to the same question.

"If you don't make haste, doublets dear, you won't be dressed in time to do so much as get home from Nancy's party."

Four exceedingly well-dressed, nice-looking girls joined Rhoda in a surprisingly short time to go to Nancy's deferred birthday installation.

Elijah ran the car down to Mimi Hunt's where Rhoda and the twins left it, dispatching him back for the rug. The Willis girls, Louise grown up and Amabel gloriously handsome, Doris Clark and Cord were already there and the girls all walked down to Doctor Porter's together.

Nancy hailed them joyously and made them crowd into the deep window-seats of her new room because, at this funny party, the furniture was to come after the guests. It really was a reception, as Nancy said, a reception to the fine old furniture which had been sent for the new room by the doctor's patients and Nancy's friends. Mrs. Lawrence had sent from her Boston house, rich in venerable furnishing, a desk that Warren had used not long before he fell at Bunker Hill, and a silver porringer made by Paul Revere. Nancy was wild with delight over these wonders which the men were bringing in from the van when the girls arrived and which Letty Hetty was setting free from their wrappings with scissors and knife, refusing to allow any one to help her in the task. Waiting the arrival of their rug was not the joyous expectation to which the Coggs girls had looked forward. They began to feel almost downhearted — for the double twins, that is. It was like their innate unworldliness to forget the great value of the rug and to begin to fear it might be unworthy of Nancy's room, to join the beautiful survivals of early Amer-

ican days which were coming into the room from the van at the gate.

When the car came down the street and Elijah skilfully ran it in a foot beyond the fore tires of the van, the double twins looked at Maizie and she arose so uncomfortably embarrassed that she hardly seemed one of the confident Coggs.

"We haven't any ancestral stuff, you know, Nancy," she said. "We didn't know what to get so we got a rug — Wait! Of course you didn't want us to get anything, but we'd die, all four quarters of us at once, if we weren't in this room, somehow! Taizie and I went down and got your Aunt Mary Lawrence to help us pick it out. We think it must be all right, as long as she thinks so. Hadn't we better have it brought in before you get everything in place? These old pieces look as though they'd never move afterward."

Hazie ran to the window and excitedly beckoned to Elijah to bring in the rug. Letty Hetty ran out to help him balance the heavy burlaped roll on his shoulder and when it had come in she ripped the wrapping open with such haste that the silky rug rolled out over the floor in almost no time.

Mrs. Porter looked at the rug aghast. "My dears, my dears!" she cried. "You should not have bought a rug of such value for Nancy!"

"Now, what's one rug among four girls, and girls

who don't have to do a thing but be snubbed granddaughters, drawing a salary for being snubbed?" demanded Taizie. "What do you suppose there is in Boston good enough for any Porter?"

"That's the point!" chimed in Maizie. "My younger sister has put it beautifully! If you don't like the rug, you're to say so, so truthfully that the Warren desk won't be ashamed of you, and back it goes to the dealer and whatever you like better waltzes straight to Chagford."

"Like it!" cried Nancy, kneeling on the glorious rug that covered the floor to exactly the right depth of wood margin. "Like it!"

"I was brought up on ingrain carpet in the best room and braided rugs in the chambers," observed Letty Hetty, who always had her say in whatever was discussed in the doctor's household, "so I'm not to say qualified to speak on antic rugs, but I should say this was not a rug to clean by anything more ordinary than a silk rag, on your knees, not even a vacuum, electric run."

The double twins looked greatly relieved. "Well, if you like it!" Daisy said.

Nancy arose from her intimate investigation of the rug and disappeared; Letty Hetty, seeing that the excitement of the afternoon was too much for the little maid, that Nancy was white and that tears were near falling, afforded an avenue of escape by asking

her help with the good things which that invaluable foundation of the Porter household had made for Nancy's installation party.

Rick Lovering was so late in coming home that the girls began to wonder what could be keeping him.

"I'm getting afraid something has happened to Rick," said Nancy, looking out for the unnumbered time to see if Rick was not in sight. "He never would be late to-day if he could help it; he knows I wanted him to see the things come in and now he should be playing for us. It's bad enough to have father late, but you never can count on a doctor. I do wish Richie would hurry!"

"Here is Rick!" cried Mrs. Porter, a little later, and she, too, looked relieved.

Nancy ran out to meet Rick. The boy was coming slowly, with dragging feet; his beautiful face was white, but Nancy was too full of happiness to see it. Within the room she had left the girls heard her say: "How late you are! Oh, Rick, what's the matter?" with a sharp change in her voice as terror gripped her when she consciously saw Rick's face.

"Where is the doctor?" cried Mrs. Porter running after Nancy at the sound of fear in her voice.

"There has been a fire at Chagford Mills," said Rick painfully. "There was an explosion —" He stopped.

"The doctor —" Mrs. Porter could not frame the question.

"Hurt," said Rick choking.

Mrs. Porter swayed as she stood, Nancy fell back against the wall, holding her throat with both hands, staring at Rick with terrified eyes.

"Mother, no!" Rick cried. "He is not dead. It is — his eyes."

"Not blinded! Not daddy! Not my dearest, dearest daddy!" the girls heard Nancy cry so hoarsely that they would not have known that it was silver-voiced Nancy who thus implored mercy by the protesting question.

The double twins caught one another's hands and gathered around Rhoda in wordless horror. Each of Nancy's guests sat motionless, tense, waiting. Not one there that did not love Doctor Porter, not one that did not owe to those kind eyes of his not only health of body, through his perception of their needs, but peace of mind and happiness, for Doctor Porter's eyes revealed to him the requirements of mind and heart and soul quite as truly as of body.

While Mrs. Porter and Nancy at the door were groping in the darkness which would shroud them hardly less than the doctor, were he blind, striving to see the way to bear so great a sorrow, and their friends suffered with them in Nancy's new treasure-filled room, the doctor came home.

The double twins heard him going slowly to the library. Hands tightened upon other hands in Nancy's room, but no one spoke nor moved.

At last they heard the doctor coming down the hall with his wife and Nancy. No one had attempted to go away; the Misses Allaire and Grandma Emerson had stayed, hoping to be able to help Mrs. Porter in this first, awful hour. The girls had stayed because they did not know how to go, nor whether Nancy might not be comforted by their presence.

But when they saw the beloved doctor's figure, a little bowed, as he hesitated in the doorway, his hand on Nancy's shoulder, not knowing where to turn to greet the friends whom he knew must be before him, and when they saw Nancy's blanched, agonized face, Daisy, Taizie and Hazie sprang to their feet, looking wildly around for an avenue of escape from the unbearable sight. Taizie threw open a window behind her with a groan and jumped out of it upon the lawn below, and Daisy and Hazie instantly followed her.

The three girls sat down under a tree, utterly regardless of their newest frocks and cried tempestuously, while they waited for Rhoda and Maizie, who had remained.

When Maizie joined them, as she did in a few minutes, she showed how much she needed the relief of tears which the other girls had been having. She had been crying, too, but with the painful effort to

restrain the weeping which heightens, not lessens, the nerve strain. She had torn her handkerchief in tatters and had been forced to dry her eyes upon her skirt, so that she presented a bedraggled and exhausted appearance when she came out upon the lawn, though her sisters were past noting it. Rhoda, too, looked as if she had passed through severe illness. Her devotion to the doctor and his family was great in proportion to her need of help when they had helped her.

"We may as well go home," said Daisy mournfully. "To think Nancy's party ended like this!"

"To think Doctor Porter's great life of usefulness has ended like this!" Hazie said.

"His life of usefulness is not ended; to live and to do good are one and the same with Doctor Porter," Rhoda amended. "But, oh, it is hard, hard!"

"Don't you think he would like us to go around by the mills and see if we can do anything for any one who may have been hurt in the fire? Rick said an engineer was hurt. As long as we worked there, even a little while, and as long as our grandfather owns the mills and gives us enough to help with, though he doesn't make us much his partners, I think Doctor Porter would like us to go around there. If he's — hurt —" Maizie would not utter the fateful word — "we've got to do every single thing he'd like us to do, to the longest day we live, so he'll know we care."

"That's the best possible way to prove that you care, Maizie dear," said Rhoda. "And that is a beautiful instinct, to remember your twofold connection with the mills. Isn't it, other girls?"

"Maizie's always right, pretty much," said Taizie listlessly. "It may do us good to try to find something to do."

The double twins and Rhoda walked softly around the house, as if it were a bed of suffering which they might jar. Silently they took their places in the car and frowned at its noise of starting.

"Do take off the noise, Elijah," begged Hazie as they rolled down the street.

As they drew near the mills they thought at first that no damage was visible; farther along they saw the staring windows denuded by the explosion, and a smoke-blackened end wall and water dripping down it showed where the trouble had lain.

"It's our old room!" cried Daisy arousing to a little interest.

They found Mr. Dermot looking old and grey. With him in the office sat Tommy Giddings, now almost a young man. The tray on the desk showed that they had been having coffee, sent in from outside, while their serious faces showed that they had been discussing the disaster.

"Hullo, girls," said Tommy sadly.

But Mr. Dermot looked glad to see them. "Per-

haps they'll have a suggestion to make, Tom," he said. "They're the very ones."

"We came to see if there was anything we could do for any one," said Maizie. "We were at Doctor Porter's when he came home — " she paused, choking.

"Is it as bad as he and Doctor Davidson feared?" asked Mr. Dermot, while Tommy turned away with a groan. They both knew and loved the doctor.

The twins nodded. "They think so. They are going to Boston to find out. Anything here we could do? You said, when we came in — " Maizie paused.

"A girl has been hurt. She has no one belonging to her and the hospital isn't done. We were wondering where to send her. She never would join with the mills' insurance plan, for accidents and sickness. She's Lizzie Horn, works in the room with Lora Bruce, the room that had the honor of the brief presence of the Coggs twins." Mr. Dermot tried to smile, but failed dismally.

Maizie shook her head. "Don't know her, but — what can we do for her? Shall we see her and find out?" she asked.

"Will you?" Mr. Dermot's relief was manifest. He arose at once and led the way through the smoke-scented corridors, to the room which had lately been added to the mills for the mill girls' use for rest and recreation. It had been fitted up by an unknown bene-

factor, but the Coggs twins' accounts would have enlightened an investigator.

On a couch lay Lizzie Horn, her arms bound with oil and cotton, the side of her face swathed, her hair cut off on that side.

The girls did not remember her name, but they recognized her as a girl who had been there during their brief time in the mills and they crossed to her with pitying faces and hands extended, till they saw that Lizzie could not clasp them.

Lora Bruce, rising from Lizzie's side, grasped the outstretched hands instead.

" Oh, twins dear, we might all have died and Lizzie has barely escaped," she said.

" We're so sorry! We're hardly able to bear it," Maizie said. " Doctor Porter, you know, is — We're going to help you somehow, Lizzie, but you've got to tell us how."

Lizzie glanced toward the Coggs twins with her one unbandaged eye, and swiftly looked away, closing it.

" There's enough to be done, but you can't do it," she muttered.

" We keep the room we had at Mrs. Deacon's, you know. Maybe you could use it? It's a reading-room for people who haven't any books at home, people like us when we came here," said Maizie. " Why can't we close the room for reading awhile, and put

Lizzie Horn in there — with a nurse, of course — twinsies?"

"Can," said Taizie briefly, visibly brightening at the prospect of usefulness.

"That'll be nice for you, Lizzie, and Mrs. Deacon will love it; she likes so to quiddle and make things," Maizie went on.

Lizzie Horn began to cry. "I never could stand you Coggs twins," she said, to the Coggs twins' manifest amazement, for they did not remember anything about Lizzie except that they had seen her. "I got it into my head when you worked here that you were stuck-up and horrid. I thought you made game of everybody. I thought it was awful when I heard you had got rich, that you were old Mr. Debbs' granddaughters. I wrote that letter signed with Peter Debbs' name, telling you he wanted you to come to see him. I heard it made him awful mad that you went. I guess I settled any chance there was of his being decent to you. So I guess you don't want to help me out now I'm burned — and serve me right!"

The double twins — Rhoda was waiting in the car below, to be called if she were needed — stood in utter surprise, silently hearing and digesting this unexpected confession. That a girl whom they did not know should have been filled with jealous dislike of them, should have attributed to them feelings least of all theirs and have written that letter, not as a prac-

tical joke, as they had assumed it to have been written, but spitefully, to harm them, were facts which slowly filtered into the minds of the friendly double twins, at once horrifying them and amazing them. Rich and poor, they had lived in the world merrily, confidingly, friendly, and they had found the world reflecting their attitude toward it — as most of us do. It shocked them to discover that all this time this girl had disliked them, cordially and unjustly.

Taizie was the first to find her tongue. She shook her shoulders with a slight movement of freeing herself from something, much as a spaniel shakes off water.

"Oh, well; that's ancient history now. What's the use? You're sorry," she said.

"And your burns are the modernest kind of history," added Hazie.

"Queerest thing you took such notions about us, but maybe we bothered you," Daisy contributed this charitable remark to the double twins' reception of her tale.

"It hasn't anything to do with your taking that room. We wouldn't be quite such dunces as to hold a grudge. It all happened ages ago, anyhow. Lora, how'll we get Lizzie around there? Send Tommy to tell Mrs. Deacon she's coming?" Maizie asked, turning to Lora with an air that disposed forever of past wrongs and ill-feeling.

Lizzie burst out crying and Maizie bent down over her, afraid to touch her, but gently stroking her skirt.

"Don't cry, Lizzie," she said. "We don't mind at all. Grandfather Debbs never'd have been chummy, anyway. To be honest, we like being let alone, as long as we know we aren't getting our own way through being mean to get it. Don't think of that silly time again. We're going to settle that room business for you now, and telephone for a sort of fire-escape nurse, who'll know how to make those poor arms and faces and heads of yours comfy. Bless your heart, the Coggs twins aren't such gumps as to be airy when there's nothing for them to be airy about, but they're tickled to death to think they can have such good times as they have and get in an extra one for some one else once in a while! Good-by; don't worry! We don't mind, not now. Good-by — as I said before! Come and see us when you get well. Of course we'll see you to-morrow, though."

Maizie hurried away before Lizzie could pour out the emotions which the twins saw were struggling upward in her. The other three girls fled with Maizie.

"It was bad enough to be hated and plotted against three years ago, when we didn't know it, but it would be worse to be cried over and admired now," Taizie said, when they had reached the safe refuge of "the palace."

They left to Mr. Dermot and Tommy the arrangements for transferring Lizzie to Mrs. Deacon's. The room which they had retained there needed but a bed to be all that Lizzie required, more than she could have had but for the Coggs.

This comforting fact nestled warm in the kind hearts of the Coggs twins as they drove silently homeward, each of the gay girls pale and sad, lying back against the cushions, quite worn out by emotion.

"To think how we started out only four hours ago with that rug for Nancy darling and what has happened!" sighed Daisy, getting out of the car with elderly slowness, as if her heavy heart weighted her lively feet.

"It's been some day!" murmured Taizie, permitting herself to slip back into her abandoned slang, but looking so spent that Rhoda did not count it.

"I can't bear to look at anything when I think that Doctor Porter can't see," sobbed Hazie, shutting her eyes and risking a fall by getting out of the car with them tight closed.

Maizie, last to leave the car, paused on the step.

"He shall see!" she cried fiercely. "He shall, if I have to pluck out my own eyes and give them to him!"

CHAPTER XI

THE COGGS THAT HELD

THERE are many things in this life which we feel will be unbearable, yet with which we manage to exist. Perhaps it is less that we bear them than that, being unescapable, we endure being road mates with them through a forced march from which they have taken the sunshine.

When Doctor Porter and his wife, with Nancy, returned from their visit to the Boston oculist, whose verdict on Doctor Porter's eyes was the death knell to their hopes, the blow that had fallen seemed utterly past bearing. That this skilful and beloved physician, this lover of mankind and of books, should be doomed to lay down his work, his pursuits, and spend the remainder of his days in darkness and comparative inaction, was heartrending tragedy. Every one who loved him and depended upon him — and this was the majority of all who dwelt in the three Chagfords — shared to a degree in the grief which was keener to Mrs. Porter and to Nancy than to the doctor himself.

But Mrs. Porter was too good a woman, Nancy was

too high-souled a girl for them to give themselves up to mourning over the sorrow that had befallen them. Instead, they aroused to their task of cheering the doctor, and of devising ways of getting him to resume his work in life, without which he would never live, in any real sense.

The grief of the double twins when they heard that the oculist had given no hope to their best friends was tropical. But, though Maizie had declared that Doctor Porter should not be blind though she had to pluck out her own eyes to give him, the twins' passionate rebellion against the verdict was no more helpful than Mrs. Porter and Nancy's quieter agony. It remained for the double twins but to co-operate in Nancy's plots to interest and amuse her father.

"We're not children; we're not even the youngest young girls, as we used to be," observed Daisy at the breakfast table the next morning.

Maizie laughed. "Aren't we?" she asked. "Queer we don't stand still! Daise, is there any special thing the matter with your intellect this morning to make it strike off flashes like that?"

"Don't know," said Daisy earnestly striving to liberate a bit of grapefruit that clung to its circular bowl of peeling. "It's working, though. What I mean is that we're old enough to do something to make Doctor Porter happier, if we can't help his eyes. I wonder if one of us could study medicine, and another

trained nursing, and get him to teach us? That's the best I could think of."

"I've been thinking, too," said Taizie, grave, while the other two twins and Rhoda laughed. "We don't know enough to start to study a profession. Rhoda has taught us enough to be ornamental, but not useful. That isn't blaming you, Rhoda-Reader; that's what we wanted to do — learn enough to shine like glow-worms, not electric lights. But you've got to have a solid foundation to build a profession on. Besides, it wouldn't please Doctor Porter to have us do that; he's not in love with women's doing everything. He told me once he hated to see a man embroidering, or a woman amputating limbs. I saw Rick Lovering last night. He's perfectly heartbroken over — over the dear doctor." Taizie's voice quivered. "But he's heartbroken the right way. He's full of plans to be the best son to him a man ever had. Girls, Rick's the best boy on earth, as well as the handsomest! He thinks he'll study medicine and work right in with the doctor, so there won't be any break in the chain, and it will keep up Doctor Porter's courage and interest to help Rick start."

"Fine!" cried Rhoda. "Twins, don't you think that some day Rick will be the doctor's son?"

"Certain sure he will!" cried Taizie, "but Nancy is not thinking of romance. She's a little girl at heart, in spite of being sixteen. She'll have enough to think

of, now, to drive everything else out of her head. The only plan I could hit on for us to work out to help that blessed man through these first awful days is for one of us to get into a bad scrape which he could set right, something to interest him. And I'm the one best fitted out to get into it."

"Taizie, you are the most ridiculous one of the four!" cried Maizie.

"'Course! That's why I picked myself out to come to grief," Taizie interrupted her before she could say more.

"What kind of a scrape had you selected? Because that is important," said Rhoda leaning back in her chair to laugh at Taizie, with half-shut eyes, as Rhoda always laughed.

"Oh, just a nice scrape, not dangerous, not the kind Doctor Porter would not approve — perhaps break a bone, or get hurt somehow — I don't know," said Taizie considering possibilities as she spoke.

"Well, of all the crazy — What good do you suppose that would do the doctor?" demanded Hazie, regarding her twin with amazement, accustomed as she was to Taizie's eccentricities.

"Sort of start him to practising, when he thinks he never can again and give him something to think about. I don't know what I mean, but I mean it! The doctor likes us girls a good deal — Oh, I mean it would sort of give him a jolt, and then he'd run on.

Rick said the greatest fear Mrs. Porter and Nancy felt was that they could not arouse him to begin. I had an idea if something bad happened to one of us it would make him fly to help us and if — well, if the doctor got started on these Coggs they might be cogs that would hold." Taizie found it difficult to express her thoughts, but they were entirely clear and convincing to her.

"I think I should not seek out scrapes, Taizie dear, even for so loving an object; they come fast enough," suggested Rhoda gently. "Doctor Porter will be useful and happy whether his sight is all insight, or partly outsight, as dear little Grandma Emerson would say."

"Are you going with us to see Lizzie Horn, Taizie?" asked Maizie. "Please don't hunt for scrapes! Such a ridiculous idea! One might think you were seven instead of seventeen!"

"Only very nice people grow up childish," retorted Taizie. "Surest thing you know I'm going down to see Lizzie Horn! You better believe I won't let you get all the reward of returning good for evil. When the Coggs heap coals of fire on any one's head, little Taizie's going to be there with one of the shovels."

"I wonder why it's good and noble to heap coals of fire on heads," remarked Hazie thoughtfully. "I don't know anything I wouldn't rather a person would do to me; sounds fearful, hot coals right on top of

your head where mine's kind of sensitive to comb hard."

"Ours are too near red already to need coals of fire," said Taizie, who was more than likely to make a concluding comment.

They found Lizzie Horn comfortable, considering the severity of her burns, when the twins arrived at Mrs. Deacon's. After the first awkwardness of meeting had been surmounted Lizzie showed that she was glad to see the Coggs girls. She showed also a tendency to treat them as her Noble Benefactors, with capital letters, but the double twins would not allow it.

"Cut it out, Lizzie, cut all that out," ordered Maizie decidedly. "We aren't doing a thing. It doesn't matter to us whether you're getting well in this room, or whether some one is reading in it; we keep it anyway. But if that weren't so, we wouldn't let any one look at us like stained glass windows, with figures of guardian angels in 'em. We don't like brass bands playing when we go by, nor insects — incense, I mean — waved at us."

"If you had such a poor, crowded home as I have and some one put you into a nice room when you were burned, 'specially some one you'd been mean about, I guess you'd feel — "

"Lizzie, cut — it — out!" interrupted Taizie with utmost emphasis. "For goodness' sake, be sensible!

What's wrong with Mrs. Deacon? She looks terribly downcast."

"I don't know," said Lizzie. "She's moping around like this all the time. I was afraid she didn't want me here."

"You haven't anything to do with it," Daisy decided promptly. "She's the kindest soul, loves to do for people. Besides, we said when we kept the room we might want to put some sick person in here, if the hospital wasn't ready. We've got to coax the deaconess to tell us her sorrows, twin team."

"All right, divide forces. Hazie and you stay with Lizzie, while Taizie and I get around the deaconess," said Maizie, going toward the door.

They found Mrs. Deacon, whom they had christened affectionately "the deaconess," in the kitchen making apple dumplings. The corners of her lips drooped and duller eyes than the four young ones scrutinizing her would have seen that tears had lately fallen from her patient eyes, with their fellows hovering close to her heavy lids.

"Good morning, Mrs. Deacon," Maizie said, dropping into the chair at the end of the table, while Taizie took the rocker by the window.

They were conscious that, as far as she could distinguish between the four Coggs girls, they were Mrs. Deacon's favorites, to whom she was most likely to confide her worries.

"You look like dumps instead of dumplings, Mrs. Deacon, dear," Maizie went on, with a little laugh. "Nothing wrong, is there?"

Mrs. Deacon shook her head, sighing. "Nothing you can help, Maizie," she said.

"There's nothing Maizie and I together can't help, Mrs. Deacon," Taizie joined in the persuasion. "Maizie alone, or I alone, might be no good, but together — my! We can make mountains out of molehills and then remove the mountains."

"I can usually laugh when you talk nonsense, Taizie," said Mrs. Deacon. "But not to-day. My heart is heavier than I hope my dumplings will be, though I'm certain my crust isn't what it ought to be and usually is."

"Now that settles it!" Maizie cried. "Tell us this minute what's up — down, I guess is nearer right."

"My dear, my dear, it surely is!" cried Mrs. Deacon, turning aside to protect her dumplings from her rising tears. "It's Tommy Giddings."

"Tommy Giddings!" cried Maizie.

Taizie sat erect with a sudden contraction of terror around her heart. She was surprised to find herself horrified at a hint of harm, of wrong to, or in Tommy.

"Never tell me Tommy is worrying you, turning out bad!" Maizie implored.

"Not he!" Mrs. Deacon affirmed proudly, and

Taizie sank back, relieved; nothing Mrs. Deacon could have to tell would be as bad as that.

"I may as well tell you the story," Mrs. Deacon said, pinching the dough around the edges where she had folded it over an apple. "Just let me get these dumplings into the pan and set it in the oven and I'll talk to you. If I get to going over the awful story I won't be answerable for what I'll do with my baking. There!" she added, after a busy three minutes of carrying out her programme. She dusted her hands and drew another straight chair to the table, facing Maizie, sideways to Taizie.

"Dear twins," she said impressively. "It's the stock."

"We don't know what that means," said Taizie as she and Maizie looked from one to the other for enlightenment.

"Stock," repeated Mrs. Deacon. "Stock I bought and lots of us around here took at the same time. I bought it to start Tommy Giddings in life. I haven't a chick nor a child of my own, so I saved and saved to do for my widowed sister's boy. Tommy wants to go into business; he's got a real good chance, going to be ready for him in about three months. First along that stock paid splendid, seven and a half per cent. and sometimes eight. Then it got jumpy; now it doesn't pay at all and so no one can sell it. And we've all lost our savings, all we've worked and

scraped so hard for, and Tommy can't start in business. And there's Lora Bruce, too; her mother bought that stock and maybe they'll lose their home, because it's mortgaged and 'tain't likely they can meet the interest — oh, dear, oh, dear!"

Maizie and Taizie listened with pity, but with bewilderment. They understood never having anything and they understood having a great deal; they did not understand about having a little and that little failing in payments, getting swept away. After an instant the story did not strike them as being as bad as it was.

"I should think that might be fixed up," suggested Taizie, looking at Maizie.

Mrs. Deacon took instant alarm. "Don't you try to do anything about it!" she cried. "Now, girls, don't! There isn't a thing you can do, except by way of charity, and if Tommy thought I'd got you started to help us out, or help me out, so's't I could help him, why, I honestly believe I'd be afraid of him, he'd hate it so! All you can do is to be sorry for us, and that comforts me."

"What makes Tommy so down on us?" demanded Taizie. "Why would he be so furious if we showed we were friends? He pretends to be our friend."

"Land sakes, Taizie, you've got the wrong idea!" cried Mrs. Deacon. "I've been wondering if you

ever did see what a lot Tommy Giddings thinks of you, of all four of you, but mostly of Taizie. If he was down on you, as you say, he'd be better satisfied to let you help him. Tommy's past eighteen. When a boy thinks there's one girl in the world topping by at least a full head every other girl in the world he don't want her to be doing charity work to start him in business. I guess, maybe, it's because he is anything but 'down on you' that Tommy's in such a hurry to get ahead."

The bright color that flooded Taizie's face stopped whatever Maizie was about to say on the threshold of her lips. She stared at Taizie blankly for a moment, for the first time realizing that romance might come to one of the contented quartette, separating her, in a sense, from the others.

Following this shock came wisdom, a sort of unselfish cunning. If Tommy Giddings liked Taizie a great deal, and if Taizie liked that liking, then it was for her, Maizie, as the twin who had always been given the leadership in twinly matters, to further his fortunes, if she could find a way to do so.

Maizie arose. "There isn't anything to say, Mrs. Deacon," she said. "It seems too silly for anything to say you're sorry — same thing you say when you run into any one in the street, or step on their foot! I'm *dreadfully* sorry! But maybe it won't be so bad, maybe it will come out. I've heard of things — stocks

and banks and such things — being horrid a while and getting over it. Perhaps this will come around. Don't stocks get bought up when they're down sometimes, by people who know that they'll be all right some day? Maybe some one will buy yours and wait to make a lot out of it! At any rate, don't feel too dreadfully. I smell your dumpling rising in the oven like everything! Make your dumps rise too! As to Tommy, he's so bright and so nice that he's sure to get on. But I'm just as sorry as if I wasn't saying foolish, cheerful things."

"I know you, Maizie; you're always sorry when anybody else is! True as I'm alive, I'm almost sorrier about those poor Bruces than I am about us!" said good Mrs. Deacon, patting Maizie's shoulder when another woman would have kissed her.

"Yes, indeed!" cried Taizie. "Mrs. Bruce looks as though she'd stood all she could, and Lora is such a splendid girl! It's no wonder all the girls call her Trusty. Do you think they really will lose their home?"

"I think it's more'n likely," sighed Mrs. Deacon. "Why on earth do such good folks have such fearful trouble?"

"It would take more than a deacon to answer that," said Maizie with a laugh. "I'm going to believe they'll have good luck because they are good — our deaconess will, too! Good-by. We'll stop an-

other minute with Lizzie and then run away. Don't worry — but I'm sorry! What was the name of the stock, did you say?"

"I didn't say. It was the Winner Copper mine and my shares would have been worth two thousand dollars — if they had been!" said Mrs. Deacon, off guard, and saying what she had not meant to say.

"Shame!" Maizie cried. "Good-by. Perhaps the business would not have been good for Tommy if he had gone into it; you never can tell."

She hurried off, but Taizie delayed to kiss Mrs. Deacon with a gentleness that few had ever seen in harum-scarum Taizie.

"It's tough!" she said, and her condensed, inelegant sympathy conveyed to Mrs. Deacon the conviction that it was deep.

The four twins left Lizzie greatly cheered by their visit and with an enthusiasm for them burning high within her.

"Such funny things as they are, but so kind, so big-hearted! My, they're great!" Lizzie said fervently to Mrs. Deacon when that saddened woman brought her a dumpling which was not forbidden by suffering from burns.

In the car Maizie and Taizie poured rapidly out to the other two the story they had heard.

"'Course it's awful," Daisy agreed with her twin's concluding question. "But what do we do about it?

We all know we aren't going to stop at saying it's awful and we're sorry."

"Not much," Maizie approved her. "Taizie and I couldn't say anything there. I was thinking while we were talking to Lizzie. Let's telegraph a letter to Mr. Carberry. Reason it has to be telegraphed is to hurry it up; if it takes long Mrs. Deacon will know we did something and we'll be left. We'll tell Mr. Carberry to buy that Winner mine stuff and get some man whose name no one heard to wire Mrs. Deacon asking if she'll sell — I don't know how to say it, but Mr. Carberry will! Let the faked buyer offer her enough to put back the two thousand she thought she'd have. Then buy it; I got ahead of my story; he'll ask first and buy next. Then he'll send her the money, our money, don't you see? And her little Tommy nephew can go into business if he wants to!"

"Wouldn't he be ripping!" chuckled Taizie, giving the wheel a swift turn that sent the car too far to one side of the road. Taizie had attained her desire, and ran the big car herself, apparently to its and her own satisfaction.

"If he found out, he'd make his aunt give the money back, and it's likely they will suspect," said Hazie.

"Suspecting isn't proving," said Maizie. "He can straighten up with us some day, if ever he gets rich."

"What about the Bruces? Aren't we going to do

anything for Lora? All deaconess and Tommy?" inquired Daisy.

"Hardly!" said Maizie. "We'll simply pay their mortgage and tear it up — can't be much; house is too little."

"See here, Maize, we're all with you, shoulder to shoulder, but — can we? Have we enough money? If only we hadn't spent so much! Shall we dare — and pay our own bills?" Daisy looked worried as she asked.

"Well, it's a new quarter, begins Wednesday. We'll have to scrimp for three months. Imagine us, the Coggs twins, scrimping on that money! But we've got to pay wages and things — we'll do it! We won't care if we cut out some gorgeous things we'd like to do; we don't have to have any candy this quarter. Oh, we'll make it! If we don't, we'll borrow from Doctor Porter! We wanted to interest him anyway; that ought to do it!" Maizie laughed.

"Yes, and the first thing they'd all think was what a lot that rug for Nancy cost! No, sir; we'll sell our family jewels, if we get broke — run short!" said Taizie.

"Well," Hazie gave a soft little chuckle which was her form of the Coggs' gay laugh, "if we *sold* our family jewels I'm afraid we'd *give away* our family!"

What Mr. Carberry said when he received the night letter telegram in which the double twins, aided by

Rhoda, stated their case and asked him to buy worthless investments, there was no wireless connection to reveal.

His telegraphed protest did not weaken the girls' resolution, and Mr. Carberry ended by carrying out their instructions. Having done his duty as their lawyer in warning them against their extravagant generosity, Mr. Carberry felt great secret satisfaction in it.

"I tell you, Celia, my dear, he said to Mrs. Carberry, "there are plenty of girls whom wealth will spoil, but there aren't many whom it will improve. I'm downright proud of those little Coggs twins. Finding them out and setting them on their upward way was a good job done. I deserve well of my country for putting power into four pairs of hands which are going to prove hands that will bless."

A few days later the double twins could not resist the temptation of seeing what change in Mrs. Deacon had been wrought by good fortune; the necessity of looking after Lizzie gave more than sufficient reason for going. They found Lora there, and Mrs. Deacon so changed from the melancholy of their previous visit that it was hard to keep from rejoicing with her before they were told that there was something to rejoice over, and, as Taizie said afterward, "that *would* have been a give away!"

They had not long to wait. Lora pounced on them

and Mrs. Deacon began to talk at one and the same moment.

"The strangest thing has happened — if it isn't you!" cried Mrs. Deacon.

"Did you think we wouldn't know you were at the bottom of it, twins, even if our stocks were bought in New York?" cried Lora.

"What are you talking about?" asked Daisy, with a well-feigned air of perplexity.

"Humbug!" said Lora. "Tommy and I know it's you. The question is: what are we going to do about it? It's just the same as if you gave us the money."

"Tommy says he won't ever let you girls give me money to set him up in business — 'specially Taizie," said Mrs. Deacon. "And nothing on this earth will make him believe you didn't do it, after I told him how I'd let you know about the trouble I was in. But sometimes I think — and then again I don't! It could be so that somebody knew the stocks would improve, after a while, and bought 'em up. It happened so quick, in New York; I don't see how you got at it so soon after I told you about it. It's so good it don't seem's if it could be so, but Tommy says no young man would want a girl, or four girls, should start him going. Tommy's funny. Won't you tell us the truth, Maizie?"

"Am I generally untruthful?" Maizie demanded, to gain time.

"Tommy!" Taizie took up the theme scornfully. "'No young man!' You tell Tommy Giddings to wait till he grows up before he calls himself pet names like that! Tommy's a mere boy, the merest boy I know of his age. If I wanted to set a young man up in business I'd dodge snips of boys, so he needn't worry about the twins — 'specially Taizie!'"

This contempt for Tommy did not delude any one, except Mrs. Deacon, whom it troubled. But Lora was not to be diverted from her point as Mrs. Deacon could be by an attack on her Tommy, as Taizie well knew.

"No good, girls!" said Lora. "We know you managed somehow to save us; Mrs. Deacon thinks it may be some one else worked the miracle, but Tommy and I *know*. And there's no use trying to refuse your kindness, because it's all settled. I'm sure I don't know what would have become of mother, if you hadn't saved her. I don't mind it as Tommy does. He has a young man's pride — in spite of Taizie! — and because of Taizie, as she knows quite well! Mother and I are only so glad, so grateful! We hope, if we wait and try, maybe we can prove it!"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, Lora, don't talk about being grateful! It sounds so horrid," cried Maizie.

"As if we were pinning pie plates behind our ears for halos when we'd never get real ones!" added Taizie, the absurd.

"If you thought we did it, you could hand us your mortgage for security," suggested Daisy with what she intended for a hard, business-like manner.

"So you wouldn't let us pay interest!" cried Lora, sharp and suspicious of these girls. "No, sir, m'am, Daisy Coggs! We're going to use your money, that you paid for good-for-nothing stocks, to pay off that mortgage; we won't let you hold it without interest, while we use the money in other ways. I can see through you!"

"Stuff!" cried Daisy. "We've been thinking of investing in first mortgages."

She looked as much like a business woman as her frowzy red hair and sunny young face allowed her to, frowning to convey her keenness in these matters.

"Well, you haven't owned up you did it, but if you did, you saved poor little Mrs. Bruce and Lora, as well as me and Tommy, though he don't like it, and I'm just as sure you'll get blessed, in more ways than we could repay you, as I am that the Lord has a good memory and power to reward," said Mrs. Deacon, with tearful happiness and so much earnestness that she trembled.

"Goodness, Mrs. Deacon, we've got all and more than we want and heaps more'n we deserve," said Hazie. "Let's go in to see Lizzie, girls. I think it's awful, the way we're getting sentenced before we've been proved guilty."

"If we ever did anything decent and we're going to get paid for it, I wish the pay would be that Doctor Porter would be cured," said Taizie, turning back from the doorway, as the four Coggs girls stampeded from further discussion of their kindness.

CHAPTER XII

TAIZIE'S EXCESSIVE SUCCESS

"I'D like to walk home," announced Taizie when the double twins, their visit to Lizzie over, came out of Mrs. Deacon's house to their waiting car.

"What for?" "I'll go with you," said Hazie and Daisy together.

"You can't walk, Daisy; you have to go to the dressmaker's and you're late," Maizie reminded her twin. "Why walk, Taizie?"

"I guess the only answer is: Why not?" Taizie laughed. "Just feel like it, that's all. Since we've been wealthy and automobilious my muscles are getting flabby. I'll get so I can't walk much better than a caterpillar stood up straight. So I'm going to walk home."

"Well, you are silly! Good-by," said Hazie, getting into the car.

Taizie waved her hand to the other three-quarters of herself as the car rolled away. She set out at a

cheerful pace along the street, enjoying the prospect of a long walk in the sun-warmed, frost-cooled air of late autumn.

The distance was considerable from Chagford Falls to the lake section of old Chagford, but there was a short cut through a rough road, made in the days when woodsmen were cutting down the trees which once stood in solid phalanxes between the lake and the town. The road survived its original use, but overgrown with a third growth of saplings, the feeble descendants of the stately trees which had once stood there; it was rocky, and rough with stumps, and was used but as a short cut, or else as a pleasure ground by those who cared more for the hidden treasures of secluded nooks than for foot comfort.

Taizie, deciding that she had undertaken a good deal in the long walk by the highways to the palace, turned into this abandoned road to shorten the distance.

It was a lonely walk, the chance of meeting any one on it was slender, and the Chagford girls never went through the woods road except in bands of several girls together. None of the Coggs girls knew enough of what fear was like to be ordinarily prudent, so Taizie took this road blithely, whistling as she walked, not to keep her courage up, for she was not conscious of needing courage, but with the blackbird's enjoyment of her own notes.

About midway in the road she thought that she heard a sound and two or three chickadees flew up from some shrubs ahead of her. Then branches snapped and leaves rustled and there came before her startled, but not frightened eyes, a man.

He was young, roughly dressed, rough-featured, with a loose hanging mouth and a nose as much too long for his face as his hands were too small for his body and his fingers too pointed for their unkempt condition.

The young man covered the few paces which separated him from Taizie and halted close to her, directly in her path.

"Don't be scared," he said.

Taizie laughed, but the warning reversed its effect; with the suggestion that she might have been afraid there crept into her heart the first, faint chill of fear.

"What of?" she inquired carelessly.

"You're game all right," the young man complimented her, plainly admiring her for being so. "It wouldn't be anything extraordinary if you was some scared. I guess you wasn't lookin' for me, was you?"

"No, I can't say that I was," Taizie admitted. "I might have been more scared, if I had known you were coming out, like a jack in the box. Are you some one I know? I don't remember you. Do you work in the mills?"

"HALTED CLOSE TO HER, DIRECTLY IN HER PATH."

"No, I don't; I don't work much of anywheres. I'm a lily by profession," said the young man with a grin.

"A lily?" Taizie repeated, puzzled, thinking the word must be the nickname of a trade, or else be the title of some trade of which she had never heard.

"Do you mean a water-lily? Is that a way of saying you're a plumber?" she asked, rapidly working out possible clues in her mind.

The man's grin broadened and broke into a laugh. "Say, you're sure game and you're funny. Plumber! Not much. A lily of the field, don't work at åll — see?"

"Oh, yes, I do see," Taizie said. "Just a loafer. Well, that wouldn't suit me as a profession. Why don't you dig yourself up by the roots, if you're a loafer-lily, and then dig other things? I must go on, Mr. Lily; I'm in a hurry."

The young man scowled. "I wasn't hunting for advice," he growled. "I guess you better not hurry home; it's too late for a girl like you to go home alone. Ain't you Miss Coggs?"

"Yes. One of her," Taizie gave a tiny nervous laugh, for she was beginning to feel afraid. "Let me pass, please. The path isn't wide enough here for two."

"That's why I held you up just here," the man was kind enough to explain. "You're not goin' home

right off, Miss Coggs. You're goin' along with me, because it wouldn't be the least bit of use tryin' to git away by hollerin' or fightin'; you're a pris'ner, my pris'ner, if I do say it myself."

Taizie's heart gave a great leap, a suffocating throb, then seemed to stand still. Her quick wits told her to keep up the appearance of courage, which at first she had felt, but which died within her as she realized that she was alone in the woods road with an exceedingly unattractive looking person. She tried to say something to gain time in which to discover something that she could do, and her brave struggle to make her voice steady was wonderfully successful.

"Talk about being funny," she said, "I'd never have thought of anything to say as funny as that! And, as to saying it yourself, it seems to me when you're making such a good joke as telling me I'm your prisoner, you needn't care if you're not modest about it. I'm fond of a joke, really, but I haven't time to enjoy one now. Please let me pass."

The young man shook his head slowly, almost regretfully.

"You can't pass, Miss Coggs, and the least said soonest mended, as the sayin' is," he said. "You're a pris'ner, and you're goin' along with me, turnin' in about where I jumped out o' the woods, an' from there we're goin' — well — further. There wouldn't be any use hollerin', 'cause, while I don't mean to hurt

you, I'd have to stop it by a gag. And if you didn't come along real nice and easy, I'd have to tie you and take you." He ended with an expressive motion suggesting hauling a heavy body by main force and a tight grip. Taizie looked at him steadily, pale, with a gleam of both terror and anger in her eyes as she realized that the adventure was serious and that she might be in actual danger of kidnapping at the hands of this strange individual, whose lightly humorous manner in the beginning seemed peculiarly sinister when it was apparent that it covered a relentless intention to be cruel.

"I wonder what would be the use of taking me prisoner," said Taizie. "If you mean it."

"Do I look as if I didn't mean it?" demanded the young man. And silently, in her thoughts, Taizie replied that he did not look insincere in the matter.

"What use? Well, now! Isn't there any money to buy me off? I wonder! I haul you off and hide you safe. Then I send word to your folks I'll send you back if I find so many thousand dollars — a big wad! — hid in a place I'll pick out. I got up the plan myself, ain't it good?" The brigand regarded Taizie with his first friendliness, as if he expected her to applaud her own capture.

"It's the way they all do it, or try to," said Taizie scornfully. "The best thing you can do is to drop it. You'll be sorry if you try that game. Let me go

home, peacefully and don't follow me, and I'll see you get a good reward — though, well, never mind! I'll see you get it."

"Ten thousand dollars?" asked the brigand, whose inclination to reveal his cleverness and be admired for it made Taizie feel for the moment, as she had felt at first, that this was not a genuine kidnapping.

"No, of course not so much; not for merely letting me go home as I've a right to go!" she cried imprudently.

"That's what I thought! But I'll get no less if I take you off, for that's my price, and if it ain't paid I'll keep you. No more talkin' now, young lady. Come along, and come quiet. I ain't foolin' you'll find."

The young man put his hand on Taizie's arm, not too gently, and she saw that her best course was to yield.

She shook off his hand and her eyes blazed. "I wish I was a man for a minute," she cried, trembling with fear, yet furiously longing to be able to fight. "Don't you touch me! I'll follow you, since I must. Go on!"

"You go first," said the brigand. "Ladies first always, ain't it? I'm goin' to keep you in front of me where I can watch you. 'Course you wouldn't sneak, bein' such a nice girl, but I'll watch you all the samee. Go on, Miss Coggs, and don't feel lonely.

I'll keep right behind you like a lock step, so nothing can happen you."

"You'll march lock step fast enough some day," muttered Taizie between her set teeth.

Her captor grinned, not hearing what she said, but plainly enjoying her spirit. He complimented her upon it as she walked, head up and unfaltering, into the murky path which he bade her take.

"Some fun takin' a girl like you captive," he said cordially. "Most of 'em 'd cry, and lots of 'em 'd faint, and give me bother haulin' 'em along, when they couldn't walk. You're too mad to give in and that's the way to be. You're tryin' to hatch a plot to get off, but that's wastin' time; it's no use. I've got the thing planned to z. What you want to do is to be thinkin' what you'll say in the letter I send your folks to make 'em come down handsome, so I'll send you back quick's possible."

Taizie did not reply. It was true that her brain was rapidly weaving plots for her own rescue, or escape, and as rapidly rejecting them as hopeless. Horror was creeping over her and deadly terror as each step among the bare trees bordering the by-path made the coming darkness more noticeable and impressed upon the poor girl the awful fact that she was alone, no one knew where, with this man who jested, yet was in deadly earnest and who might prove capable of any crime.

When abductors found their victims in their way Taizie was sure that they killed them and concealed their dead bodies for chance to reveal. She shuddered to think what might befall her before another sun should rise. The only wisdom lay in being as little trouble as possible and to hope against hope that she might be rescued by some happy chance.

Her captor saw her shudder and noted that she immediately threw her head up higher and squared her shoulders.

"I like pluck," he said. "If you go on like you do I'll be swanged if I don't wait a bit before writin' for that ransom money, just to see pure grit workin' overtime! It's a sight, and that's no lie for me!"

Taizie felt for an instant as though she lost consciousness as she heard this. If she made her capture too difficult she feared that this man might do away with her, to be rid of her. If she were brave, he might hold her longer to watch "pure grit working!"

In spite of herself Taizie uttered a sharp cry of agony.

"How can you?" she said. "How can any one want money bad enough to torture a girl?"

The man scowled at Taizie's back and it was lucky that she could not see the expression that settled upon his face; cruelty and greed made him look like a wolf.

"I'd do mor'n give a girl a tough week and scare her well for some money," he said.

After this nothing more was said until he had brought Taizie to a small hut, which had once been a wood cutter's lodge, but which was dropping to pieces from the invasion of weather.

"Now we've got to hurry up," announced Taizie's captor.

"I'm in no hurry," said Taizie, dropping exhaustedly on a board that lay on the earth floor of the hut and digging her heels hard into the ground in a circle till it looked as though there had been a struggle there. Her quick wits told her that it could not be long till she was sought and she meant to try hard to leave behind her some trace of her passing.

"I am," said the man decidedly. "We've got to get off before your folks miss you. Here's some things you're to put on instead of your hat and coat. You'll tie this here thick veil around your head, too, so if we should see any one they won't know you. Put on these clothes."

Taizie took the shabby coat and hat held out to her and lifted them gingerly.

"Germs!" she observed. "I don't like second-hand clothing."

At the same time she rapidly considered how to leave behind her something she had worn, foreseeing that her captor would keep sharp watch of her and undoubtedly take from her everything she discarded as fast as she exchanged garments.

"They're big," said the singular brigand. "I looked out for that. Just put 'em on over your own."

"I can put the coat on over my gown, but not over my own coat. I couldn't move if I did. And how can I wear two hats?" asked Taizie.

As she spoke she took off her hat, but her captor foiled her intention to drop one of her two hat pins.

"I'll trouble you for them till you want 'em for the next hat," he said. "No sowin' seeds of trouble here, Miss Coggs!"

"You're clever," said Taizie giving him the hat pins. She shook with fear, yet managed to laugh.

She fumbled at her hat, pretending that it had caught in her hair and doing so contrived to drop the silken crown lining which she wrenched out. It fluttered to the ground, unnoticed by her enemy; its stamped label would tell her sisters that she had been here. A moment later she slid one of her shell hairpins to the ground and set her foot on it.

This time she laughed involuntarily as she took from her captor the repellent hat he offered her and the thick veil.

"I was thinking I didn't know what to call you," Taizie said hastily to explain the laugh. "It's funny to travel with a gentleman and not know his name."

"You're the coolest hand I ever seen!" cried the "gentleman" admiringly. "I guess you can get along without my name, though."

"I'll call you Herod, because you torture the young," said Taizie with cheerful frankness, wishing that she really were as cool as she seemed, yet thankful that she was able to seem so.

"Now come on!" said "Herod" after Taizie had tied up her head, taking as long as she dared for her costuming.

He shoved her ahead of him out of the hut and poor Taizie staggered, pretending to be hardly able to walk. In truth she was newly horror-stricken as she left that miserable refuge to set out alone with her captor upon an unknown journey, full of all sorts of horrible possibilities.

There was a clump of bushes just beyond the hut. Taizie threw herself into them with a cry.

"I can't go! I can't!" she screamed.

"Herod" pulled her to her feet none too gently. "You will!" he said fiercely.

Taizie knew then that his singularly easy manner, his half joking ways were but adopted to troll her along with the least difficulty, that if she tried to resist him he would be violent to her. She therefore dragged herself onward submissively. She had done what she meant to do, though at the price of a scratched face. The bushes into which she had fallen were broken; who ever came here to seek her would see that it had been freshly done and in this get another clue to her fate.

"There'll be a horse to take us along, by and by," "Herod" vouchsafed to her, and with this scant consolation Taizie kept on.

In the meantime the other three twins had gone homeward in the car, but had stopped at the Porters' on their way.

They found Doctor Porter, sitting patient and pathetic in his darkness, as he always was found since the accident, with Nancy in a low chair beside him, reading to him and patting his arm with her left hand to compensate him for not seeing her face.

"Why did you let Taizie walk home alone, children?" asked the doctor, instantly alert on hearing that Taizie had chosen to walk.

"Why, doctor?" asked Maizie taking alarm from his manner. "There's no danger, is there?"

"Not if she keeps to the main roads," said the doctor. "But Taizie is not likely to do this; she will take the short cut, and it is not safe for a girl to go through that old woods road alone."

"You speak as if you were frightened, Doctor Porter," cried Daisy, instantly frightened also.

Nancy dropped her book and sprang to her feet. Hazie began to cry. Fear leaped from one to another, set in motion by the doctor's startled face, like an electric spark from a battery.

"I have heard only this morning of a man who was

not a Chagfordian, hanging around those woods," said the doctor. "Nancy, go find Rick. I think we'd better send some one out that road to make sure that Taizie is all right. Mildred, please call up Rhoda Drummond and ask if Taizie has come home," he added as Mrs. Porter came into the room, followed by Letty Hetty with a tray of hot chocolate, which nobody so much as saw.

"There's Tommy Giddings going by!" cried Maizie rushing to the door.

She came back with Tommy, as Nancy entered by another door, with Rick in her wake.

Rick's handsome face was troubled, Tommy's square jaw was set and he looked suddenly thin.

"You don't imagine anything's wrong with — her, do you?" cried Tommy.

The doctor shook his head. "It isn't wise to imagine evil, so we won't do it, but — I wish Taizie had stayed with the others. I'm troubled; I'll own that."

Hazie began to sob hysterically. "Oh, Taizie wanted to get into a scrape to interest Doctor Porter; maybe she's done it! Oh, Taizie! Maybe she's done it, too well!"

"Oh, Hazie, wait till it's all over before you wail!" cried Maizie. "I hate people who make a fuss when there's no reason to!"

"Rhoda says she isn't there, but it takes a long

time to reach the lake region, walking from Chagford Falls," said Mrs. Porter, returning and trying to administer the balm with the wound she gave.

"Come on, Tom," said Rick. "Quicker the better."

"After her?" said Tommy Giddings.

"Where else?" demanded Rick. "Wish we had a revolver and a license to carry one."

"I have," said Tommy, pulling a revolver out of his pocket and displaying a badge on the inner side of his vest. "Mr. Dermot got it for me in the mill. I've been carrying funds for him lately. Out the woods road, do you say, doctor, starting from the Chagford Falls end?"

"No. There's a path leads into that road from this end, across country into it. Rick knows it. I wish I could go with you, boys! You need more than you two striplings, if there should be trouble. Suppose there's a gang, that the man who was seen there is not alone!" said the doctor.

He began to pace the floor, aroused from his patient lethargy, as Taizie had foreseen he would be, if one of the double twins got into trouble.

"Oh, daddy dearest, time is so precious!" cried Nancy feverishly. "Tommy and Rick are surely enough — with a revolver! It would take longer to get others. You do know the path, don't you, Richie? The one we used to take to find the pipsissewa?"

"I know," Rick nodded. "There may not be anything wrong. Funny we're all so sure there is! Ready, Tom?"

"Ready! I'm eating myself to start," cried Tommy, gnawing his cherished beginning of a moustache.

The three Coggs girls were frantically pacing the floor.

"Take us! We could help fight," cried Daisy.

"No, we couldn't," Maizie said. "We'd go slow on account of these idiot skirts. Go on, do go on, boys!"

"Take our horn, Rick!" cried Nancy, which practical inspiration Letty Hetty expedited by rushing away to fetch the horn and giving it to Rick on the front piazza.

Rick and Tommy disappeared down the street at a pace which satisfied even the fuming impatience of Taizie's other selves. Doctor Porter put his hand heavily on Nancy's shoulder.

"Sentenced to uselessness, my dawtie!" he murmured, permitting himself one of the few hints of repining which he had uttered since he had been stricken.

Nancy laid a finger on his lips. "We're all leaning on you," she said, with loving truth.

Rick led the way into and down a hidden path which he and Nancy had loved when they were chil-

dren, which they had haunted for the woodsy secrets, the lovely wild flowers which it held.

The air was sharp, the flowers dead, the birds flown, but neither of the boys would have seen them had it been midsummer.

They plunged along as fast as the overgrowth and stones would let them, emerging into the woods road which Taizie had traversed not two hours before.

Tommy took the lead now, for the hut which he had in mind as a possible hiding-place of danger to Taizie, had been a favorite playground for him and his comrades of the Falls, while they were growing up.

The hard road betrayed no footprints and Rick and Tommy pushed on, wondering whether this were a needless alarm, or whether harm had actually befallen Taizie.

They entered the hut and together exclaimed. Their eyes instantly fell on the loosened ground of the floor which Taizie had dug up with her heels.

Tommy fell on his knees with a groan, and arose with a white, set face, holding up Taizie's hairpin for Rick to see. At the same moment Rick espied the hat lining and pounced upon it.

The boys looked at each other a moment in speechless horror. Then Rick said:

"She's been here. She fought some one here. She's kidnapped!"

Tommy drew out his revolver. "Come!" he said, and no more.

Outside the hut they noted the broken bushes and ground their teeth. Taizie's clues were interpreted as she had meant them to be, and, except that there had been no struggle, because she had not resisted capture, they were interpreted aright.

"It can't have been long ago," said Rick. "It isn't dark yet."

"It's light enough for me to shoot any one who has harmed Taizie," said Tommy Giddings. "Hurry, before it gets too dark to see."

The boys broke into a run, pushing their way through the woods as fast, yet as noiselessly as possible.

CHAPTER XIII

RESCUES

RICK and Tommy rushed along through the woods, regardless of the roughness of the road. Occasionally they stumbled and plunged headlong over the stumps which the fallen leaves concealed. Their faces were scratched and bleeding, their hands torn, but nothing of this abated their speed.

Do what he would, eager as he was to hasten, Rick could not keep up with Tommy Giddings. Tommy forged ahead as if he were a machine, incapable of shortness of breath. Rick was lithe and athletic, slender, quick in every motion, but Tommy surpassed him on this quest like a race-horse.

Rick began to suspect, as he maintained his relative position to Tommy only by putting forth his utmost powers, that Tommy was running under the motor power of more than ordinary anxiety, that Taizie's danger meant to him the danger of one for whom Tommy cared in no ordinary way.

"Some one has passed," said Tommy over his shoulder. Rapidly as he ran he noted another broken shrub. It was not much broken, but, in passing it, Taizie had contrived to strike against its outer branches to leave a sign for those who should follow.

"Taizie!" cried Rick triumphantly, as he paused to examine a footprint revealed by a piece of damp clay soil which interrupted the leaf mold of the road.

The proof that Taizie had recently gone this same way acted like a stimulant to her rescuers; Rick and Tommy pressed on faster than before, covering the quarter miles at a record pace.

"Look!" Tommy stopped so suddenly that Rick stumbled against him, then righted himself to stare ahead where Tommy pointed.

They both saw a man not far in advance of them, pushing on fast, yet walking in such a way that they were sure some one was ahead of him.

"He's marching Taizie!" said Tommy. "Taizie's ahead. I'll sprint and shoot him from the rear."

"No, you won't," said Rick, cooler than Tommy. "We'll take him alive and you might shoot too well. Look, Tom, 'way through there. Isn't that a horse tied?"

"Sure," said Tommy staring through the trees. "Take him alive nothing! He's more use dead. But I'll guarantee not to kill him."

"Sprint along that line of trees; you can get

through, and jump out ahead of him. I'll keep up behind and we've got him. Have your revolver ready and, if he needs it, let him have its seasoning. But pop up in his path; more fun," said Rick with sincere enjoyment of his own programme, yet also fearing that Tommy's furious anger would lead him to aim better than he intended and that it might be bad for him to be known to have shot before defence of themselves, or of Taizie, had made it necessary.

"Here goes, then," said Tommy, throwing down his cap, drawing his revolver and darting, like a trout in a pool, under the limbs of the trees which, at this point, formed a narrow avenue of comparatively straight division between their ranks.

Rick could see Tommy for only a moment after he had left him. Knowing that no impediments would delay him, now that he had come within sight of Taizie and her captor, Rick ran on as swiftly as he could and yet took care that no heedless footfall set a stone rolling, or cracked a branch to betray that rescue was on the track of the abductor.

The last paces of his approach Rick had to take on a walk, creeping forward, for he was within hearing distance. He saw that a youthful woman's figure preceded the man toward the waiting buggy, but he had never seen Taizie look like that. He wondered, as he crept stealthily onward, whether, after all, he and Tommy could have made a mistake. But Tommy

"'WE'VE GOT YOU!' HE CRIED, CATCHING THE MAN BY THE COLLAR WITH A FIERCE TWIST."

was coming upon them from the front; Tommy would know whether or not this were Taizie.

Just as Rick began to wonder whether Tommy had missed his cue, Tommy dashed out from the trees, revolver extended.

Rick heard Taizie scream, and recognized her voice as she dropped full length in the path.

"If you move you're dead," Rick heard Tommy say. "And I wish you'd move!"

Rick leaped forward. "We've got you!" he cried, catching the man by the collar with a fierce twist.

"Take it," Tommy said thrusting his revolver into Rick's hands, quickly, not to allow their enemy a moment's advantage in the transfer.

"Get him to jail, Rick. I've got to see to Taizie. Walk close and keep your cannon trained every instant; don't let him get away. If he tries it, shoot. Be a good thing if you could get an excuse to shoot! Take him away, quick! I'll tear him to pieces, if I look at him."

"As to tearing to pieces, boy, I'm some tearer myself," drawled the kidnapper. "You're not a heavyweight at your age. But you've got the best of me with the gun. If I'd of known you was comin' I'd of had mine out, but I suppose you wouldn't care about letting me draw it? Ah! thought not. I wasn't ugly to Miss Coggs; you can ask her when she comes to. S'prised she fainted, but I suppose it's 'cause she has

been so blame plucky; kinder dropped when she saw she didn't have to keep up. She's the gamest ever! All I wanted was a handsome ransom, so to speak. I wasn't mean to her. Sorry you're so offended. Brothers of hers? Cousins — "

"Rick, get out with him!" ordered Tommy, bewildered, still raging angry, yet half tempted to laugh. Rick was shaking; it was impossible for Rick to hear this calm, not to say kindly address without laughing. Rick's sense of humor lay near the surface.

"Get along with you," said Rick to his prisoner, accepting his office without disputing with Tommy for the privilege of looking after Taizie. "Drive back with that horse, Tom. Sure you can get on all right? Taizie won't stay in a faint, I guess. It was the shock of relief, as this gentleman implies. She's moving. Sure it's all right? Well, then, good luck to you. Drive fast; the girls will be crazed with anxiety. Move on, you noble Roman! The Sabine racket doesn't always go. Remember, I've got the revolver right at the back of your head and, while I don't feel bloodthirsty, I'll shoot as quick as a wink if you try any tricks."

"My boy, I haven't a trick in my hand," the brigand assured Rick earnestly. "My highest was a pair and I had to discard one of 'em."

"I could find it in my heart to love you, you are such a gentle brigand, and humorous, withal," ob-

served Rick to his prisoner's back. "Pity you make it necessary for me to take such an unpleasant walk with you!"

"Gentle brigand! Right you are, my boy. I'm more gentle than brigand; I'm a regular comic opera brigand, I am. But I need money, and I had a fine scheme for gettin' it; you really hadn't ought to of spoiled it, premature, so to speak. When I can get what I want bein' nice about it, I am nice. It's wearin' on the constitution to get riled up. But I don't deny when I have to be firm, firm's my lay. I wouldn't say, if I could of got to my buggy and whipped out my own artillery that's in it, that maybe I wouldn't of come along so accommodatin', nor let that peppery kid friend of yours shoot first, as he'd of been so glad to of done, let him tell it." The man ended with a sigh, Rick could not tell whether it was one of weariness from so long talking, or regret that Tommy and he were victors, living to triumph over their captive's defeat.

"I believe I'll take you to Doctor Porter first and hand you over later," said Rick with an inspiration.

"I'm not sick, kind boy, nor crazy," said the "comic opera brigand."

"No, but he is sick, blind, which is worse. He needs amusing, and if you wouldn't amuse him, I don't know!" cried Rick with conviction.

"Don't you think you could see your way to letting

me go altogether, not taking me anywheres?" suggested the brigand persuasively.

Rick shook his head with entire decision. "I most certainly do *not*," he said. "It's all very fine to laugh at you, as long as I've got you at the point of this little six-shooter, but if I hadn't got you at all, and you were this minute driving off with Miss Coggs your agonized captive — well, it wouldn't be so funny as it might be. You've done a pretty bad thing; the kind of thing that we're not used to in old Chagford, and I'm afraid you'll find the old town ready to board you for a good while. She'll want to make sure of keeping a genius like you under lock and key."

The young man sighed. "I'm not thirty years old," he said. "It's the awfulest pity to put young folks in prison. I ain't more'n ten years older'n you, if I'm that. You ask Miss Coggs if anybody could of been politer. You'd think now, — wouldn't you? — that a little scheme for makin' money, that didn't hurt nobody at all, might be looked at, we'll say, with blinders."

"I don't know," said Rick at a loss how to reply to his singular incumbrance. "They may use a magnifying glass, you know."

Tommy turned to Taizie after Rick had gone and stood looking down upon her, without attempting to revive her. The look in his honest eyes was almost maternal as he pityingly thought of the fear that she

must have suffered and the courage she had shown, according to her captor's testimony.

"But anybody'd have known you would have been game, Taizie," Tommy said aloud.

Taizie opened her eyes, closed them, opened them again with a look of terror, which melted into wonder, then lighted with a great joy as Taizie's mind took in the fact that it was Tommy Giddings, no other than good old Tommy, and not an enemy, looking down upon her. She did not speak, nor attempt to move, nor did Tommy make a sound or motion either, rightly judging that it was best not to hurry Taizie after her mental strain.

It seemed to Taizie as though she were waking from a fantastic nightmare, but here she was in the woods, there stood a patient horse who was to have borne her away, she was weak and quivering — and there was Tommy! It could not have been a dream!

Yet her first words expressed her sense of unreality.

"I'll never eat anything that makes me dream such a dream again, Tommy," she said with a wavering smile.

Tommy bent over her with his face full of feeling, but all he said was:

"Better get up, Taize; it's too cold to lie on the ground now."

He held out his hands and Taizie put hers into them. Tommy pulled her to her feet and steadied her

gently by her elbow when he saw that she swayed a little as she stood.

"Silly!" Taizie said in high disgust with herself. "But honest to goodness, Tommy, I didn't make a fuss as long as there didn't seem to be any help for me. I never fainted in my life; none of the Coggs twins are fainters. Sensible, isn't it, to faint when I saw you? And not too flattering, is it? — poor Tommy! But when I saw you, and it rushed over me that I wasn't going off in that buggy, with that Herod of mine, after all, well — it sort of rushed over me, that's all!"

"Herod?" echoed Tommy, wondering.

"Because he tortured the innocents," explained Taizie. "I had to call him something, and he wouldn't tell me his name. I don't believe Rhoda would have liked me to go driving with a young man whose name I didn't know, without a chaperon!"

"Taizie, you're a great kid!" cried Tommy in a burst of fervent admiration. "You'd carry off any old bother with nonsense! You — you beat the Dutch!"

"Did you think Herod was Dutch?" asked Taizie meekly. "Though it was you and Rick beat him. When I remember how you longed for an excuse to shoot him, I'm almost afraid to go home with you! But as long as Rick carried off the weapon I suppose I may risk it. If we're going, Tommy, mayn't we

start? Because I'm homesick for the palace and the Coggs twins, the rest of 'em, and for Rhoda and all the comforts of home — including supper, especially coffee! Abduction has gone to my knees; they're wobbly! Take me home, Tommy!"

"Bless your heart, Taizie, I'm ready!" cried Tommy, hastening to untie the horse's halter. "Come, I'll help you in. I'm ready."

"Oh, Tommy!" cried Taizie. "Don't you see that bundle there? Herod dropped it when he left us. It contains my coat and hat. Let me get it; don't leave my own dear Coggs garments! These things are killing me, eating my heart out — like a cutworm, from the outside!"

"Gather 'em up, crazy Taizie!" laughed Tommy. "If you'd spoken before I untied the steed I'd have helped, but he wants to start."

"How I sympathize with him!" sighed Taizie, as she went to pick up her property.

Tommy and Taizie drove along the woods road in silence for half a mile. It was growing late and the state of the road made it a careful matter to drive it in the gathering darkness.

Taizie broke this silence. "I wonder how I can ever prove how grateful I am to you, Tommy Giddings?" she said. "You and Rick, but it seems as though it were more you who rescued me, somehow."

Tommy's heart beat quicker. He had been conscious of a desire for that very effect, a desire that would have been mean, had it arisen from a wish to surpass Rick under other circumstances. It was only that Tommy longed to be able to render a supreme service to Taizie, and he could not help wishing that it had fallen to his lot to rescue her, single-handed and alone.

Perhaps Taizie knew this, as girls generally know unspoken longings of this sort, or perhaps it was that Taizie, too, would have been glad to owe her rescue to no one but Tommy.

Tommy was so young that he was capable of feeling a great deal that he could not express. Youth often feels more intensely than older years, but takes its refuge under emotion in inadequate words, while maturity exceeds its feelings by expression, sometimes.

"As to being grateful, Taizie, you know that's poppycock," said Tommy now, while his heart thumped joyously. "You've always been nice to me, all you Coggs twins have, and to Aunt Elona, and I guess the thanks are due on the other side. But there's one thing I don't want, since we're talking about it: I don't want you to do money favors for me. I know who bought Aunt Elona Deacon's good-for-nothing stock, and what she wanted the money for, and that she told you about it, you girls — not you only, of

course. Now, Taizie, I don't want you to set me up in business, and that's what it comes to, even if you do it second-hand."

"Oh, Tommy, I despise pride!" sighed Taizie. "The wrong kind. Even the Coggs twins have pride, but, of course, theirs is the right kind!" Taizie laughed, but she was thoroughly in earnest. "I don't like the pride that won't take a favor from a real friend, any kind of a favor. What difference does it make whether it's money or something else? I wish you wouldn't feel that way! Now I'm awfully glad you rescued me. And isn't that a heap bigger thing than money, especially when you've a Grandfather Debbs who gives you lots, though he won't see you, and you don't have to do one thing to get it?"

"Taizie Coggs, it isn't one bit the same thing to rescue a person and to give them money; you know it, so be honest!" cried Tommy.

"I didn't give you money!" cried Taizie. "I mean we didn't. We can't help it if you've an aunt that's foolish over you! I will own up that rescuing and paying for things are different, but army mules trampling me couldn't make me say it wasn't a great deal bigger kindness — I mean saving a girl from getting carried off."

"Taizie, if you liked a girl a whole lot, liked her — well, a whole lot, you know! — would you want that girl, even if there were three other girls helping her,

and they looked almost just like her, would you want that girl to be, say, a quarter of the one who set you up in the world? And have the rest who helped in it her sisters, so you'd owe your start to her family? Wouldn't you rather hustle around and start yourself so, some day, you'd be man enough to — to — see if she'd like you a whole lot, too?" Tommy stammered, but he was entirely unconscious of himself in this simple, yet indirect declaration.

It did not seem to surprise Taizie. She looked straight into Tommy's eyes with her own candid ones softer and sweeter than any one had ever seen Taizie's mischievous eyes before. The smile on her merry lips was sweet and womanly, but her reply to Tommy's boyish revelation of affection was wholly a young girl's.

"If I were a boy, Tommy dear," Taizie said softly, "I wouldn't care where the money came from that started me. I wouldn't care if it came from the girl and her sisters, because I'd know she didn't think it mattered. If she had a lot, and I didn't, and if she cared just as much for me as I did for her, then I'd feel as though it was so much one thing that you couldn't any more tell where it started than you could tell where a circle started, if you saw one drawn. It's the caring that counts, not money, Tommy dear. If she had money and I hadn't, I'd know that was just because it happened so — especially if I knew she had

been poorer than poor, and always would have been, if a lawyer hadn't gone out and found her, something like Pharaoh's daughter and Moses! And I never, *never* in all this world would make her miserable by fussing over such a tiny thing as a big fortune is, because even very old people don't live on earth long enough to spoil things by being proud and bothering. It's caring that counts, Tommy Giddings; that's why the Coggs twins couldn't get spoiled by being rich — they just cared for one another and — and real things! I'm not clever and wise, and I am the brimmest full of nonsense of all the four brimful Coggs twins, but I know enough to know this!"

"I guess that's the biggest kind of wisdom, Taizie," said Tommy, and his voice was not steady. "I'll try not to fuss, as you call it, to be big-minded. Still, you know, a fellow that's worth his salt wants to be worth, well, his plums, for instance. You — you spoke as if there wouldn't be much trouble about the girl liking the fellow a lot; a whole *lot,* Taizie, that would be!"

Taizie looked at Tommy with her frank smile, the Coggs smile, which lit up the twin faces and revealed white teeth between curved red lips.

"It's just as easy for a girl to like anybody, Tommy, as it is for a boy, easier maybe, because girls haven't as many things to take up their attention," she said. She laughed, but she was in earnest, and

her laughter did not make her eyes less warm as they looked frankly at Tommy.

"Me, Taizie — and you?" hinted Tommy.

Taizie nodded. "A girl can like a boy a whole lot, enough to — well, to be glad he liked her, too, but she couldn't stand silliness and she wouldn't want to talk about it, not if she was a Coggs twin. It's comfortable to think about it, but, well, I guess the double twins aren't sentimental! Chums are the best fun, T. Giddings, my dear, and I'm awfully glad you think so, too."

Tommy looked for an instant as if he was going to protest against the sentiment which Taizie calmly attributed to him as his own, but he thought better of it and contented himself with a comrade pat on Taizie's shoulder.

"You're a great Taizie, and there's no mistake about it!" he said. "There's one thing: I'd rather be your chum than any one else's — any relation you please!"

"Good boy, Tommy," said Taizie, closing the subject. "You may be glad then, for I want you, too. Is this the public coming out to meet us?"

"As sure as guns!" cried Tommy, after one glance ahead.

There were a good many people hurrying along toward them. They saw Mimi Hunt, Doris Clark, Cord Tilden surrounding Doctor Porter's tall figure,

Nancy, of course, at his side. They saw the Coggs girls, Taizie's own twin in advance of Maizie and Daisy.

"Stop the horse, Tommy!" cried Taizie, one hand clutching at the reins, the other grasping the buggy side as she prepared to jump.

Tommy obediently stopped. Taizie was over the wheel in an instant and she and her bereft other selves broke into a run from the opposite direction, and met, in a tumultuous onslaught, midway of their course.

The four tawny heads gathered together in an embrace that made them look like one seen in a four-sided mirror.

Maizie, Daisy and Hazie hugged Taizie, and Taizie hugged them, all four uttering incoherent sounds, sobbing, laughing, screaming, behaving as if they had gone mad with joy.

"Oh, Taizie, my dear, my dear!" cried Rhoda seizing Taizie as the twins' embraces slackened for a breathless moment.

She folded Taizie close in her arms, and then Nancy Porter caught her, and all the other girls followed suit, till Taizie was all but demolished.

"I might — as well — be kidnapped — as killed!" gasped poor Taizie.

"Taizie, dear, I've been stirred out of all remembrance of my troubles by the thought of your danger," said Doctor Porter. "I could not rest. I made

Nancy let me come with the others to learn if there were tidings of you. We were badly frightened, my child; we could not remember the loss of eyes when we had to face loss of you, or your being in danger."

"I knew if I got into a dreadful scrape you would be interested and better, doctor darling!" said Taizie with a laugh that came near being a sob.

"Where's Tommy?" cried Maizie, though Tommy sat, the most conspicuous person about, alone in the buggy enjoying the scene.

"Tommy!" cried Maizie and Daisy, and fell upon him wildly.

"What shall we do to you?" cried Hazie.

"Wait till you catch Rick; don't do it to me alone," implored Tommy. "Let me drive Taizie home; she is starving."

"We couldn't let her go without us," said Maizie. "The car's waiting, with Elijah in it, almost as anxious as we were. We'll be home in no time. Ceescy has a big supper. Come, too, Tommy! Come everybody, doctor, Nancy, Mimi, Doris, Cord, all of you. We'll celebrate!"

"Not to-night, Maizie. Take Taizie home and make her go to bed early; she will need rest," said Doctor Porter. "I'll be up to see her in the morning. We'll celebrate another time. But I think we're all giving thanks in our hearts to-night, and that's the truest of celebrations."

Somehow the double twins, mercifully undivided, reached their waiting car.

"Glory hallelujah and praises be!" ejaculated Elijah, as he saw Taizie, though the babel of happy voices as they approached had told him that he was to see her.

They drove home as rapidly as the law allowed, falling silent as they went. The other three twins managed to keep a hand on some part of Taizie all the way. Tommy, who had given over the horse to some one and had come with the Coggs to a supper he sadly needed, turned in his seat beside Elijah to watch the happiness that was not less his than the girls, perhaps more his, if all were known.

"Taizie, we have heard of a great German specialist, an oculist, who can all but perform miracles on eyes," Daisy said suddenly.

"Oh! Doctor Porter?" cried Taizie.

"We wondered. He is in Germany; it would be hard and dreadfully expensive to get him here," said Hazie slowly.

"But if we could and if he could — cure the doctor, I mean — what a way to celebrate my rescue that would be!" cried Taizie. "A second rescue, rescuing the doctor from blindness, because I was saved, but most because we love him so?"

"If we could!" sighed Maizie.

"If we can, you mean, we will!" Taizie corrected her.

CHAPTER XIV

"COGGS SISTERS, IMPORTERS"

THE double twins went down to Doctor Porter's the morning after Taizie's abduction.

"Not a bit the worse for it, either!" as Letty Hetty said admiringly, when she admitted them. "If there's one thing more'n another calculated to make an aging woman wish she could hold on to youth it's the way it goes through things and don't show it! Worry don't leave any more mark on young faces'n a skipped stone does on a pond's face. Doctor Porter's waiting to find out what you goin' to get done to that man. They're holdin' him on just disorderly conduct charge."

"Herod?" asked Taizie cheerfully.

"Only that ain't one bit his name," said Letty Hetty. "He's told it. What you s'pose 'tis?"

"Hopeful Steele," said Hazie promptly, and her duplicate sisters laughed.

"No. Reginald Claude Dill!" cried Letty Hetty, pausing before the door of Nancy's sitting-room where the Porters were gathered.

"Dill! I knew he was some kind of a pickle!" exclaimed Taizie.

"Reginald Claude!" Maizie cried. "Doesn't he sound like the hero of one of the novels Rhoda doesn't like us to waste time over, because they don't give us any better taste in reading than we had before!"

"You wouldn't hurt little Reggie, would you, doctor?" asked Daisy, opening the door and heading the little Coggs procession into the room.

"No need of asking if you're all right after the kidnapping!" cried Nancy, flying up to welcome the double twins.

"Your nerves are still the magnetic needle sort that settle back to equilibrium as soon as their jar is over," said Mrs. Porter, patting Taizie's shoulder. "We are more than thankful you are safe, Taizie dear; we spent some anxious hours yesterday. But, do you know, your captor is positively funny. He reveals moods which might be dangerous, but usually he is actually amusing."

"The Coggs girls couldn't have anything happen to them that wasn't funny," said Maizie. "If we were in a shipwrack it would turn out to be a hat rack."

"It's ship*wreck,* Maize!" screamed Hazie, falling helplessly over the arm of her chair, laughing with the others.

"Isn't that a shame! It would have been such a nice joke!" said Maizie unabashed. "Can't expect

all four of us never to make a mistake, when we didn't make anything else such a little while ago. What are you going to do with that man? What made him try to steal Taizie?"

"What is done with him depends on you," said Doctor Porter. "He is held on a charge of disorderly conduct till you appear to make the more serious charge. It is certain that he deserves severe punishment, yet — I can't quite explain why, even to myself — I can't feel that he deserves it. I willingly admit it, but — I can't justify letting him off, only he is playful in his ways!"

"That's a good enough reason," exclaimed Daisy. "That's why you always let us off. Whatever made him think of stealing Taizie?"

"He did not think of stealing any special twin," said Doctor Porter with his quiet smile. "I won't have Taizie conceited over it. He had been watching and hoping for a chance to abduct one of you for several days. Taizie happened to play into his hands by electing to walk home that day from Chagford Falls. Of course all he wanted was to hold the Coggs twin he might capture for a ransom. But the reason for wanting the ransom is so fantastic that I'm sure you'll never guess it. What do you think he wanted to do with the money?"

"Raise sheep," guessed Hazie.

"Raise Cain," Taizie amended.

"Get a barber shop and barb," suggested Maizie.

"Go as a missionary," said Daisy.

"You're all wrong, though you aren't much less fantastic-minded than Reginald Claude," Doctor Porter smiled at the double twins. "Reginald Claude wanted the ransom to buy a balloon."

"A — Oh, my gracious!" cried Taizie, and the four Coggs, and the Porters with them, laughed till the tears came.

"What for? What on earth *for?*" gasped Maizie.

"To join a circus and give exhibition balloon ascensions," explained Doctor Porter. "It seems that has been the dearest ambition of his life; I should judge that it was, in fact, the only ambition of his life. It seemed so touchingly small boyish that, when he confessed it to me, I felt not only like letting him off from his just punishment, but like setting him up with a balloon on the spot."

The four Coggs twins nodded hard. "Sure!" said Maizie decidedly. "I wouldn't like to lock up anybody who wanted to be in the air; it's bad enough to put a common walker in jail."

"I'll tell you what let's do!" Daisy had an inspiration. "We'll all of us go down and scare him into blue fits, make him think he's going to get the prosecutingest kind of a prosecution and a sentence that'll bring him out just a few days late for his own funeral, and then let's offer to be noble and not punish him, if

he'll promise never, never to be a naughty Reginald Claude again. I'll bet it's that hifaluting name that made him want to go up in a balloon!"

"I know something still better," cried Maizie. "Get him to go to work at something or other and tell him if he'll work hard and save up toward his balloon we'll help him buy it."

"And use our influence to get him in with a circus," added Hazie.

"We haven't any influence with a circus; we merely are one!" commented Taizie.

"But I do love the Home Missions my twins are founding and the next time we have a meeting I'm going to sing: 'Rescue the Perishing' and then 'Throw Out the Life Line,' for a what-do-you-call-it, do-it-over-again? An encore!" Doctor Porter turned toward his wife with a smile that would have been an exchange of glances once.

"Like most of the Coggs twins' ideas there's a fine mixture of sense and nonsense in this one of Maizie's," he said. "Perhaps we can get our 'gentle villain' to amend his ways in order to attain his balloon — which is only another way of saying to attain his ideal. We all of us will do a good deal for that, and many of us have ambitions as inflated and fantastic as Reginald Claude's balloon. He must have had a foolish mother to have been christened such a name as that. Perhaps she was his extenuating circumstance!

We shall not be considered sensible, but I think we are right to give this fellow a chance."

"I'd like to give everybody in all this world a chance!" cried Maizie springing to her feet. "We've had such a fine one. Will you tell them down at the lock-up that we're not going to bother with Reginald Claude? And could you ask him, for us, whether he likes our plan? We'd hate to have to go down and call on him, Doctor Porter."

"I'll attend to the case, Maizie," said the doctor. "If he likes the plan, as you mildly put it — one would expect him to be pretty thankful to escape his punishment — I'll get him employment in Chagford where he can be watched. There's one thing about being blind: nobody wants to refuse my requests. I'm sure I can place this man and further your missionary work."

"Oh, but if only you could be cured!" cried Hazie impetuously.

"I'm getting adjusted to it, my dear, and that's the next best thing," said the doctor, with his old kindly smile subdued into an expression of patience.

Nancy threw on her sweater and went to the gate to see the twins off.

"Twinsies, you looked at one another when you said — when Hazie said that about daddy's being cured. Have you heard any one say that it might

be? Miss Allaire, Doctor Davidson, any one?" she cried.

Maizie, at whom she looked, shook her head. "No, Nancy, dear, we haven't. But it always seems as though he might be when you see him; he's so splendid each time, all over again," she said.

"Oh," sighed Nancy falling back, drooping in every line of her slender body. "But I'm afraid that works the other way. I begin to see that maybe he is allowed to be blind just to prove how splendid he really is, to show what a great man can do without seeing, that he can love God as well and be just as useful when he has lost his greatest possession as he was before, and so have even more influence than ever. But, oh, I want him to see mother and me! Just to see mother and me again! My daddy dearest can bear it, but sometimes I can't! I'm always reaching out for little straws of hope, like Hazie's saying that and your looking at one another, then getting pushed back into the hopeless pit! Don't mind me, twins dear! Once in a while I behave like this, as if it were all new and unbearable, but not often, truly."

Nancy's head drooped on the gatepost and she shook with tearless sobs.

The double twins encircled her, patting and stroking her without speaking, their tears falling, and Nancy's little dog Fred came wagging his whole body to her, imploring her to look up and see that he was there

to do anything he could do for her. Nancy choked back her unexpected storm of grief, kissed the twin nearest her, hugged Fred and smiled bravely.

"Father is growing happier, trying his best to adjust himself to it," she said. "Being made head of the hospital has helped him a great deal and he is as interested in its coming opening as he can be. Mother and I are learning to carry the burden, but once in a while it slips crooked like this and we don't carry it so steadily. I suppose it has to. Don't look so sorry, twinsies; I'm sorry I troubled you."

"Great Scott, as though that mattered!" Taizie burst out. "What we want to do is help. I believe we'd unDebbs ourselves, not be Peter Debbs' granddaughters at all, not have the palace, nor the car, just be our poor selves again, working in New York, if it would cure the doctor."

"I believe you would," Nancy heartily agreed. "You're the best Coggs twins on earth! There's one thing: Daddy dearest is made to feel how people love him and esteem him, and maybe it's better to see that than it is to see the things one's eyes show. I'm all right now; don't worry! Good-by and bless you! We felt terrible when you were in danger, Taizie. We'd care just as much what happened to you as you do for our troubles. Father walked the floor after Rick went to hunt for you until he came back — with Reginald Claude at the end of his revolver!" Nancy

laughed, shutting up her eyes with amusement, proving that she had once more got the upper hand of the sorrow that must always be a great one.

The double twins drove away. Taizie had long ago attained her ambition and drove their car when she preferred to. Maizie, too, drove it well, but Daisy and Hazie were satisfied to be passengers and made no attempt at driving.

"It's awful!" cried Daisy, out of a long silence as they purred their way homeward through the wintry denuded streets. Her sisters knew that she, like the others, had been dwelling on the thought of Doctor Porter's blindness.

"Dreadful," Hazie agreed. "I suppose some blindness can't be cured, but how do we know his is that sort? You wouldn't think it would be."

"If we could get that great German oculist we heard about to come over and try," said Maizie slowly. "It would cost a lot and we've got to scrimp a while to make up Mrs. Deacon's stock, hers and the Bruces, but we could mortgage the palace and save till we paid it off."

"Or sell it and board till we could buy another house," said Taizie in all seriousness, though this suggestion made the other twins smile.

"We could do it somehow, because we would," said Daisy. "The only thing is would the big German doctor come and could Doctor Porter be cured?"

"Let's write the oculist and find out whether he'd come," cried Taizie, almost running the car into the gutter in the excitement of her own suggestion.

"And what he'd charge," Hazie supplemented her. "But for goodness' sake, Taizie, don't break all our necks and make it necessary to get surgeons, too!"

"No necessity at all for surgeons, if you've broken your neck, Hazel, my poor foolish twin sister," said Taizie loftily.

"We'll import an oculist," said Daisy thoughtfully. "I wish I could remember what we learned with Rhoda about tariff and duties. If we're importers we'll have to understand free trade and protection and high and low duties — and we can't!" Daisy interrupted herself with pretended despair and a chuckle.

"To think of curing Doctor Porter! Us — we — which is it? — doing it!" cried Taizie, regarding the miracle as all but wrought since it had been decided that they were to ask the great oculist if he would come to America. Taizie was nothing if not sanguine.

"We'll be the Coggs Sisters, Limited, Importers," Daisy said, resuming her idea of the coming of the oculist. "I wonder what 'limited' means, tacked on a firm like that?"

"Doesn't fit us anyway," said Maizie. "We're not limited; we're the limit! Everybody thinks so, I guess, though they don't show it."

"We're getting nice," said Hazie, defending their

quartette so solemnly that there was a trio of laughter from the other three.

"I don't think we're the limit now," she persisted. "Maybe we were, but we're not. We're quite nice. Not nice like Nancy, but nice like Coggses. There aren't any nicer girls anywhere than Maizie, Daisy and Taizie Co— "

"And Hazie Coggs," Maizie interrupted her. "We're all alike, so drop the modest humbug, Haze! Good thing to come out without Elijah once in a while. If we had him along we couldn't throw bouquets at ourselves this way without hitting him in the back. We're improving, little sister, but we're sunflowers; we never'll be lilies-of-the-valley."

"'Specially sunflowers on top," commented Taizie, touching significantly a tawny lock that had escaped her hat and streamed out from her face on the wind.

Taizie took the car up to the imposing front door of the palace with skilful avoidance of the edge of the lowest step, yet stopping directly before it.

The double twins found Rhoda watching for them. She came out to speak to them.

"There's a reporter here," she said low and rapidly. "He's from a Boston paper. He wants to interview you. It seems last night's Chagford paper had an account of Taizie's kidnapping. Do, pray, girls, be careful what you say! Don't play pranks. Nonsense isn't understood when recorded in type, unlabelled."

"Wait till he hears about the balloon!" cried Taizie jubilantly, to Rhoda's dismay; she had no clue to what this could mean and Taizie's springing out of the car, plainly ready to fill the reporter's ears, terrified her. Rhoda knew that the double twins were too grown up to afford to be talked about and misunderstood.

"Take her around to the garage, Elijah the Profit," said Taizie, handing over the car to Elijah, whom the double twins sincerely rated a "profit," as Taizie had dubbed him. "Come on and be interviewed, my sisters! Always wanted to be. Isn't this great!"

Rhoda followed looking anxious, as well she might, for when the Coggs twins were primed for mischief there was no conjecturing what they might say.

The reporter proved to be a young man, not more than twenty-five. He had a pleasant face and, as Daisy said later, "wore a brown suit and a fountain pen."

He arose to meet the double twins who visibly affected him, as they did all who saw them for the first time, with utter wonder over their four times repeated identity.

"My card," he said, much more embarrassed than the girls.

Hazie took the card he extended, being nearest to him. She read aloud:

"Despard Longacre. *The Current Day.*" Then she looked at him, struggling not to laugh.

"I represent *The Current Day;* you must know the paper," said the young man. "Will you kindly let me interview you?"

"Mr. Longacre," said Taizie solemnly, "I've always wanted to be interviewed, but I never expected to do anything interesting enough to get into the papers. And now it's really Reginald Claude who did it; he stole me. But please don't interview him!"

"Are you the one? Reginald Claude! Is that the man's name? Oh, ginger, what luck! Keep on talking like that; it'll make a corking interview!" cried the young man, losing all trace of embarrassment in a burst of joy.

"Couldn't talk any other way," Taizie assured him, sharing his pleasure. "Is that a good interviewing way? That's dandy! You don't need our history; everybody in Chagford'll tell you that, how we were so poor and got rich being granddaughters. You know all that, don't you?"

"I sure do," said the young man, making rapid notes. "But it's coming alive. Please tell me how you were kidnapped, tell it your own way and don't leave out a thing. I'll boil it down, if it needs it."

So Taizie, with a relish that there was no mistaking, launched out into the story of her adventure. It lost nothing on her lively tongue. Before she had

talked long Despard Longacre was convulsed and the three other twins and Rhoda were listening and laughing as though they had never heard it all before.

Taizie told with gusto of the coming of Rick and Tommy. Somehow, without saying anything directly to this effect, she conveyed an impression that Tommy's coming to her rescue was more important than that Rick had come.

The reporter smiled and made a note to remind him to hint at a dawning romance at this point in his story. The other three twins glanced at one another with dismay. It was the first time that it had occurred to them as an actual probability that an outsider might one day be grafted upon their fourfold completeness.

When Taizie reached the sequel to her story and said that her abductor was to be allowed a chance to reform, to gratify his longing for a balloon to exhibit in a circus, the reporter's joy knew no bounds. Rhoda, too, to whom this was as new as to him, fell face downward into a sofa pillow and laughed till she cried.

"It's preposterous, it's farce comedy, I never heard anything half so absurd! If this interview doesn't make a hit, my name isn't Despard Longacre," declared the owner of that name.

"I thought a despard was a kind of a — kind of a — well, a kind of a bandit," said Hazie, in a crescendo of hesitation, halting over her words and blurting them out at the end.

"And that I had a hand in the kidnapping? No, I didn't," said Mr. Longacre. "You aren't thinking of a desperado, are you?"

"Maybe," said Hazie undismayed. "I guess I am. And you might say," she added, glancing at Rhoda, mischief in her eyes, "that we're going to import — if we can. Coggs Sisters, Limited, Importers, you know."

"What are you to import? Paris gowns?" asked Mr. Longacre, guessing a joke was lurking somewhere, unseen of him.

"Hazie!" exclaimed Rhoda imploringly.

"Not gowns; we can't tell what it will be. Perhaps we can't get it," laughed Taizie. "You'd better not put in the importing part; it's true, yet it's not what you think. Anyway, it doesn't belong to the kidnapping part of the story."

Maizie had been out of the room for a moment. She now returned.

"You came from Boston this morning and have been waiting, Mr. Longacre; we were a great while coming back. Cleopatra Samaria Cantata has a lunch ready for us. What's the matter? Oh, yes; that name! Isn't it funny? We're used to it, but it nearly killed us at first. We call her C. S. C. — Ceescy — for short. She's the biggest darkey, biggest-hearted, too! Come, please, and try her cooking."

"One minute till I make a note of her. I've got to work that name into the story somewhere. Cleopatra Samaria Cantata! If that doesn't beat every other coon name to a frazzle!" cried the young man, jotting down his note frantically and then following his surprising young hostesses into the dining-room.

Lunch was a merry and tardy meal. It was not over till after three o'clock. Its sauce was laughter, the best of sauces, but Cleopatra Samaria Cantata's skilful cooking needed no heightening relish.

Despard Longacre looked from twin to twin, hearty liking, admiration, sheer wonder in his eyes. He had never met with anything at all like these duplicate, happy, frank girls in the whole course of his considerable experience.

He went away with rich material for several interviews and left behind him the best of good impressions. He also left a promise to return "for personal and private interviews, not intended for publication," as he put it.

After he had gone, the double twins banished Rhoda from their councils and put their heads together to concoct a letter to the great German oculist who might possibly restore Doctor Porter's sight. The problem was how to write the letter so that he would consent to come and try.

"Of course it won't be German, but he can get

some one to translate it for him," said Hazie, on whom, as the most intellectual of the twins, the chief responsibility of the composition fell.

The letter was written at last and dispatched. Secrecy was so far from being a double twin habit that the mystery attending upon this performance troubled Rhoda.

Taizie's keen eyes saw this. She went up to Rhoda and hugged her.

" Trust us, Rhoda, and don't worry. You're to know all about it by and by. It's not a prank; in fact it's too good to be true. Honest to goodness, it's nothing you wouldn't approve," she said.

" All right, Teresa dear. I don't need your ' honest to goodness ' oath. If you say it's all right, I'm satisfied," said Rhoda, her face clearing.

" That's the best of this household, we don't need one another's vows. We've an awful confiding confidence in all of us," said Daisy truthfully.

The following Sunday's issue of *The Current Day* contained a long story of " The Fairy Fortunes of the Coggs Twins." Mr. Longacre had pleaded for pictures and Taizie had given him snap-shots of the palace, the lake, of the new hospital, almost ready now for its opening, which he wanted because the twins had given the land for it, and of themselves. The interview was, therefore, fully illustrated, and Despard Longacre had written it well, bringing out

the fantastic humor of the double twins' adventures, yet delicately conveying a true impression of the sweetness that underlay all that they did.

"The finest of true gentlewomen," the interview ended, "are these young granddaughters of that self-made man, old Peter Debbs, whose beginnings were so poor, but whom wealth cannot spoil, who use it with simple gratitude, aiming to be happy and to give happiness. There is a mysterious hint that these four young women are intending to enter an importing business as The Coggs Sisters, Limited. But this is not yet ripe for the public, nor is it certain that it is not one more of the many playful rumors with which these merry girls like to excite their acquaintances."

"Oh, think of his putting that in!" cried Maizie. "We told him not to."

"He wants to play a little himself, maybe," suggested Hazie. "Well, I think that's a fine interview, the most interesting story I ever read, and it's great to be in the paper, just as if you were the President's family, or a White House bride, or something like that."

"Or a princess in the palace, 'ladies of the lake,' as Doctor Porter calls us," suggested Daisy. "We'll have to get at fixing this house over before it has its pictures in the paper again. I begin to see it is pretty mixy."

"If we can afford it. Importing may be expensive and stock buying we know is," said Maizie, folding the paper carefully to avoid creases in the reproductions of the pictures.

CHAPTER XV

THE HERR DOKTOR

THE double twins waited with feverish impatience for their reply to the letter which they had dispatched to Germany. Their impatience was so great that they began to look for the reply before their letter had been delivered. The days went slowly by; they knew that, by the most generous allowance, their letter had been received more than three weeks, yet the answer for which their souls burned and yearned did not appear.

"We never enclosed a German stamp for reply!" cried Hazie. "Maybe that's why!"

"As though a great man like that would fuss about a five-cent stamp!" exclaimed Taizie disdainfully.

"You never can tell where great people are going to show up little," said Hazie, with unexpected knowledge of human nature. "And the Germans are all thrifty. But s'posing he doesn't answer at all!"

"I wonder how many more times we are going to suppose that?" said Maizie.

"In the meantime — the meanest kind of time —

I'm talking about, the time we're waiting — do let's try to think of something else, even if we can't."

"And it isn't such a fearfully long time, if only we weren't seething and sizzling, and it's really far from a mean time," said Taizie with a sudden rejection of her previous impatience. "The Chagford Hospital is opened and named for Doctor Porter — wasn't he pleased when they said it was to be called St. Mark's, indirectly after him?"

"And did you see Nancy applauding as hard as she could and crying harder?" asked Daisy. "She and Mrs. Porter were so proud and glad that Chagford honored the doctor!"

"Ah, but afterward!" Rhoda Drummond cried, shuddering.

The Chagford Hospital had been opened with appropriate ceremony. At a crowded public meeting the three Chagfords had accepted and dedicated this important institution, following the addresses usual to such an occasion with an entertainment. Nancy Porter as Portia, the doctor as Shylock, Rick Lovering as Bassanio, were to give the casket scene and the court scene from "The Merchant of Venice," in costume. A cry of fire had arisen in that densely crowded hall, and Doctor Porter, forgetting his blindness, had rushed into the crowd, controlled it by the sheer force of his magnetic voice and presence and, with Nancy at his side and Rick playing the violin, as only Rick

could play, had led the crowd in an orderly march through the hall, past the smoke pouring out by the gallery stairs, into safety.

It had been a deed of heroism tremendous for a sound man to accomplish; it was little short of a miracle to have been done by one who was blind.

To the doctor's instant courage, his presence of mind, his power to sway and to lead human beings was due that day Chagford's deliverance from a tragedy frightful beyond conjecture. But that the doctor had stayed and controlled the fear-maddened throng hundreds would have filled the new hospital with agony, hundreds would have been borne to rest in the peaceful Chagford cemeteries on the outskirts of the three Chagfords.

"Oh, Rhoda!" Maizie groaned, repeating Rhoda's shudder. "To think how near it came to a panic! I see it all the time, that rush forward, and Doctor Porter, blind, but going as straight as if he could see, to stop it! I know some of us would have been killed. We are so excited over even little things, we twins!"

"Unspeakably awful, but how glorious!" cried Rhoda. "None of us can live long enough to forget that scene, Doctor Porter in the Shylock costume, Rick so transfigured and beautiful, playing like one inspired, as he led the people, clad in that velvet costume that set off his wonderful beauty so perfectly! And our Nancy dearest, so frail and white and brave

in her black law gown and Portia mortarboard cap, not faltering a bit, but marching with her head up, her pale face all glowing eyes — Oh, what a joy it is to know that there are souls so highly wrought that even their own deadly fear and peril cannot daunt them!"

"Well, I suppose there isn't any one who saw it will forget it, Rhoda," said Daisy slowly. "I guess there was just one long breath drawn in by all the Chagfords together that night, and that when it was breathed out it was just one big sigh from all the Chagfords that meant: God bless Doctor Porter!"

"That's a nice way to say it, Daize!" cried Maizie looking at her twin with admiring surprise.

Hazie openly wiped her eyes. "That's why I can't stand it to have him blind, blind to the end! If only he could see Mrs. Porter and Nancy! They did so love to see one another! That's why I'll die in tiny scraps of bursting if we don't hear something soon from that German man," she said.

"Of course that's why," said Taizie in an unwonted mood of discouragement. "Yet that's why I'm sure he either can't, or won't, help our doctor. Because, you know, the Lord must love Doctor Porter; he's exactly the Lord's kind of man, and they say the Lord afflicts those He loves."

Maizie stared, then she laughed. "I don't believe it; not that way," she said. "It must mean people

who need it; of course you'd send anybody you loved what they needed, but Doctor Porter doesn't need affliction; he uses happiness so beautifully. I don't believe for a minute that the Lord makes people unhappy, unless they need it, and I do believe good people must have a great deal done for them to pay them back. So I'm going to expect Doctor Porter to be better, somehow, some day, to pay him. That's more sensible than your idea, Taize, and more Coggsy to expect good luck. Though it isn't one bit Coggsy to be talking about what the Lord does, as if we knew, when we're about the last ones who would!"

"Miss Maizie, Miss Twin Young Ladies, any of you," said an unctuous voice at the door.

"Yes, Ceescy," called Maizie. "We're all four here; come in."

Cleopatra Samaria Cantata's immense bulk appeared in the doorway. She was the same great rolling creature, black and solemn externally, "quite pink and white by nature," as Hazie had once discovered.

In her hand Ceescy carried an envelope which looked worn and browned, "rather as if her color had run on it," Taizie said later.

Nobody dreamed that there was any personal interest for the double twins in this battered envelope till Ceescy said:

"It's the afternoon out of ev'ybody — 'mongst an' 'mid de people you hires, twin young ladies, 'ceptin'

dis biggest one an' fustest one you sees. Miss Dorinda Allaire, likewise Miss Belinda Allaire, dey drives in yere, but didn't have no time to stop. Dey says I's to tell you de pos'master hands 'em out a letter, askin' 'em please would dey 'cipher fo' which it was meant fo'. An' Miss Belinda she say it's done been pow'ful far goin' roun' an' strayin', an' it's been so wrote over an' han'led by hands dats black, not like Cleopatra's, but de comin' off kin', dat 'twan't so easy makin' out, an' de writin' not too cl'ar, 'cause 'twan't 'Merican writin' — "

"For us? A foreign letter?" cried Maizie, cutting short Ceescy's high delight in her own prolonged verbal wanderings with a swoop that took the letter out of Ceescy's hand and the words out of her mouth.

"I should say it had gone around! And isn't it dirty? But, Rhoda, see! It's the German postage stamp, isn't it?"

"Nothing else," Rhoda confirmed her, with no less excitement.

Maizie tore open the letter, and the other three twins gathered around while Ceescy continued to fill the doorway, lingering to learn the mystery of the defaced letter, less from curiosity than from genuine interest in the family which she had adopted.

"Oh, horrors, it's written in German!" cried Taizie, frantic at being baffled when her eyes rested on the first, utterly incomprehensible page of the letter.

"You can read it, Rhoda; please hurry!" implored Hazie.

"I can read printed German fast enough, but written German goes slower," said Rhoda taking the thin sheets and sitting down to her task. "It is especially fine writing, and illegible, and this transparent paper caps the climax," she added, frowning and diving into the reading.

Rhoda read, translating as she went along. The German idioms and verbs at the end of the sentences made a funny jumble, for Rhoda was in too great haste to reach the meaning to take time to do herself credit as a translator.

The formal letter told "the gracious fraüleins" that its writer was sensible of the compliment implied by the request to him to cross the ocean to examine and, if possible, to cure the great physician whose eyes had been injured in an accidental explosion. They would see, he said, that it was impossible to give an opinion on the likelihood of his success. They would also see that it would be a great deal to ask that so great an oculist as the writer should go so far, merely to give an opinion. On the other hand, he had been much moved by the letter so naïvely asking him to do this impossible thing. The sketch it outlined of the gracious fraüleins' love and gratitude for their great doctor and kind friend touched him. "We Germans," he said, "are profoundly sentimental; for a sentiment

we would make tremendous sacrifices." Therefore, and since he had long desired to visit the United States, he might consent to take the trip and, if possible, help the afflicted "Amerikanisch doktor." He would make the long-contemplated journey one of duty, not mere pleasure, and undertake it speedily, if the gracious fraüleins would assure him of not — too great a loss. Whereupon he mentioned the sum for which he would gratify his desire to see the United States and respond to the call of sentiment on behalf of Doctor Porter. It was a sum so great that the double twins gasped and looked at each other, amazed and crestfallen.

"Sell the car and turn off everybody but Ceescy," said Taizie, first to rally, as usual, from the shocked silence that had fallen upon them.

"Mortgage the palace," said Daisy.

"Sell the palace," amended Hazie.

"We can't do anything that Doctor Porter would know about. He'd be angry — well, perhaps not angry, but he wouldn't like us to raise money to get a doctor over here to see him and he'd stop it, if he knew it in time, or pay us back if it was too late. We can get along and save up enough to pay these debts, if we try. It would take a big slice out of Doctor Porter's money, I'm pretty sure, and if it turned out to be all for nothing, we ought to pay for risking it. All Chagford says that Doctor Porter is only com-

fortably well off, because he's done such an awful lot of charity practice. The only thing I see for us to do is to go down to the bank and talk to that nice old president of it, and see if we can't get him to take a mortgage on the palace and nobody know one thing about it." Maizie's expression as she spoke was both anxious and hopeful.

"Rhoda doesn't say anything?" hinted Daisy.

"What can Rhoda say, dear girls?" said Rhoda looking troubled. "I know that a great many people would blame me for not doing my utmost to prevent your undertaking this. Debt is never right, but, on the other hand, it is sure to be paid, though it might be at a loss to you. There's where my puzzle comes; I owe you first consideration. But I feel just as you do about doing this for that dear family, every one of which does so much for us all, for all Chagford. And I'm not sure, dear twins, even if it came to money loss for you in the end, that your gain in greater ways would not outweigh it. Character means so much more than money. You have been poor, and then carelessly rich; perhaps you will grow richer by far, in lasting riches, if you have to economize in order to serve others. I'm afraid to advise, because I'm hampered by responsibility to you. The majority of people would blame me for not trying to check you, but I want your highest good — as well as the dear Porters' — and I believe that often the truest wisdom,

the wisdom of other worldliness, is called folly by this world, but in the end proves itself the way to the most lasting good."

"You dear old Rhoda!" cried Maizie, getting up to hug Rhoda. "Don't look so bothered! You couldn't stop us, so whatever happens it won't be your fault. We're not asking for advice about doing this, only about how to get at it."

Rhoda laughed. "Then I may as well say I approve it, because that's what I want to say. Whatever happens you can't actually suffer."

"I'd like to know what else you said before but that you approved it!" cried Hazie. "What do you think of Maizie's idea?"

"I think it's utterly unbusinesslike and improbable, but that the whole thing is so out of line with practical sense and common experience, that perhaps it can be brought about by unlikely means. Try it; you can but fail," said Rhoda.

The double twins, therefore, found themselves later in the day timorously sitting in the office of the grey-haired old president of the Chagford bank, regarding him anxiously as they waited his verdict on the story and the request for a large loan which they had poured out.

Old Mr. Dillingham looked at them steadily from under bushy white eyebrows, his lips pursed up, his face blank, his eyes turning from one to the other

fresh young face before him, each an apparently exact reproduction of the other, all wearing the same expression of eagerly tense appeal.

"H'm," observed Mr. Dillingham, after what seemed to the girls an interminable silence. "Ha!" he added. "Have you considered, my dears, that this would curtail your pleasures for many a day, that you could no longer gratify your whims, dress, go, eat as you pleased? Or else, if you were not strong-willed enough to go through it thus, would wipe out your home and leave you far worse off than you are to-day?"

"Yes, sir," cried Maizie eagerly. "We realize exactly what it means. What do we care? Rhoda — Miss Drummond — who looks after us, has told us what it means. But, goodness gracious, we can afford to be hard up a while; we were poor as a pudding stone rock before we got to be granddaughters! What we can't afford is not to have Doctor Porter see, if there's a chance for him to get cured."

The old gentleman brought his hand down on his knee with a resounding smack. His eyes shot warm approval from those bushy jungles which hid them, and he laughed aloud.

"Gallantly spoken, Maizie Coggs!" he cried. "What a soldier you'd have made! But there are many fields fought and won where more courage is displayed than under gun fire, and I'll be blessed if

I don't think women win more such battles than men! Now, look ye here, young twin ladies, this is a National Bank and we can't hold mortgages, it's forbidden us. Don't look so crestfallen; always wait for your sentence after you've been convicted; don't anticipate the judge! The bank can't loan you on your mortgage, but I can and I will. Once, when I was in the kind of trouble that slays, Doctor Porter pulled me out and all his life I've known him for the whitest man I've ever seen. And I like loyal love and gratitude, which is surely the rarest of human virtues. I take off my hat to you, plucky little enthusiasts, and I congratulate you on knowing how to love your friends, which is not as common a talent, either, as it is supposed to be; so for your own sake, and the sake of the fine folly you plan, and for Mark Porter's sake, I'll loan you what you want and take a mortgage for it at four per cent. I won't have legal interest on a loan that borders too close on illegality — at least it's infinitely beyond the law of daily experience."

"Oh, Mr. Dillingham!" cried Hazie, and, to her own dismay, burst out crying.

"It's because we're so glad," Taizie needlessly explained, her voice shaking.

Maizie arose and held out her hands, both of them, impetuously, yet with dignity.

For once the harum-scarum Coggs twin bore herself like a princess.

"We can't thank you, Mr. Dillingham," she said. "But it doesn't need thanks; it thanks for itself. One thing, please: Promise us you won't let a living soul know about it. We're going to get the German doctor to promise not to tell that we had anything to do with his coming to America. He'll just seem to be here and that we heard about him and got him to come up to Chagford. That much Doctor Porter'll have to know, but not that we had anything to do with his coming from Germany. Then, if it's all for nothing, it won't seem so much matter, and if he could cure our doctor — why, it isn't nice to be made a fuss over, is it?"

"Not at all," returned Mr. Dillingham with a quizzical look. "Nobody likes to be praised, let alone thanked."

Maizie laughed. "Honest, I hate a fuss, as if you thought you were some," she said, embarrassed and losing her dignity as she relapsed into her old speech. "Besides, Doctor Porter would pitch in to pay us back, and that sure would be awful."

"I will keep silence, my dear, at least for a while," said Mr. Dillingham. "I will give you a certificate of the money which your German is to receive when he presents it in person. No reason why you should pay in advance, but he must be guaranteed, obviously. Wait till I draw up a paper for you to mail him. What's his name?"

"The Herr Doktor Hermann von Schwartzenwald-Süssenluft," Maizie carefully read this name from a slip of paper which she took out of her pocket-book. "Rhoda practised me on it, but I don't believe I could have said it, if I hadn't been used to buying things in a German delicatessen in New York, when we were little girls."

"And what we'll call him, goodness knows," added Taizie. "We'd only begin that name when we met him and finish saying it when he sailed back to Germany."

"Seems to be an outdoors name, Blackforest-Sweetair. Call him Doctor Sweetair, only two syllables, and hints of pleasantness," suggested Mr. Dillingham, rapidly filling out a certificate of deposit for this stranger, conditional upon his presenting it in person.

The old gentleman arose and handed the paper to Maizie. Then he shook hands warmly with the four girls and held the door of his office open for them to pass through it, his old-fashioned ceremonial manner modified by a farewell pat on each twin's shoulder, conveying his cordial liking and sympathy.

Taizie, driving the car herself that day, sent it home at a rate nearer the speed limit than they usually came.

Rhoda, impatiently marching the piazza in her coat and cap, knew before they had turned in at the gate

that the double twins had been successful on their errand. Now that it was accomplished, Rhoda felt a sudden terror that she had not prevented the double twins from assuming this risk. She could not share their joy as she had expected to when she went with them into the house to frame the letter which should summon Doctor von Schwartzenwald-Süssenluft and enclose to him the pledge for which the double twins' home should be involved.

The letter was dispatched, and, once more, the double twins' life became one concentrated waiting for news from Germany.

It came within eight days in the form of a cablegram.

"Sail from Hamburg Tuesday," it read; it was dated Sunday.

The double twins began to watch the shipping news from that moment; they ordered a New York daily paper in order to watch for the chronicle that the great ship, bringing the German oculist to the United States, was "spoken."

She arrived in port duly, and a few hours later the Coggs girls received a telegram from one of the smaller New York hotels saying that the doctor had arrived and would go to Boston, thence to Chagford, on the second day after this message was sent.

"He's good and prompt," said Daisy excitedly. "We must notify Mrs. Halleck at the inn when to

expect him. You see, he's picked out a quiet, small hotel in New York, so we were right not to engage a place for him at the Somerset Arms, but to send him to the Chagford Inn. It really is nicer, though it doesn't make a bit of show."

"Rick's cousin Bianca is a genuine countess and she liked the Chagford Inn heaps," Hazie reminded her. "Do you suppose he speaks English?"

"No, I do *not*," Maizie said emphatically. "But none of us has supposed he did any of the dozens of times you have asked that, Haze."

"I'm sure I wish he did," groaned Hazie. "*Yaw* and *nein* are about our limit, and we'd have no mortal idea of when to use which."

"I've been studying German," said Taizie, with a fine air of careless superiority. "*Lieben Sie der Hund? Yaw, aber ich liebe auch die Katze und der Pferd. Du bist fericht, mein Kind.* That last is a quotation from a song," Taizie kindly explained. "I shall probably introduce the German remarks I've learned to say to the doctor by asking him: *Waren Sie krankheit am Meer?*"

"Oh, Taizie, you absurd girl!" Rhoda said, as they all laughed. "Your primer questions are all right, except as to value, but '*Waren Sie krankheit!*'"

"That question I composed by looking out the words in the dictionary; the others were ready made

in the First German Lesson Book," announced Taizie with a great assumption of modest dignity.

"How on earth shall we talk to the doctor, really?" cried Daisy. "Rhoda, you must try; you know German; you read it."

"Reading it, when somebody else is responsible for getting the cases and genders of the nouns and the article right, and the verbs in their right places, both ends of the verbs that have to be separated, and doing it oneself are different," said Rhoda. "I fancy the doctor will have an interpreter, if not, I'll try, but it would have to be a failure if I tried much."

"Well, that's bad enough, but if we get the two doctors together, one will be examined and the other do the work without much English talking," said Maizie. "What worries me is not how to talk to Doctor Sweetair, but how to talk to Doctor Porter. I wish he had been told."

"If he had been told about this doctor before he had arrived Doctor Porter would know we had been in the secret of his coming," said Daisy.

"Of course. I meant I wish it were done and over with," sighed Maizie.

Two days later the four Coggs girls, with Rhoda Drummond, repaired to the Chagford Inn to call upon the famous German oculist.

He came down to the low-ceiled inn reception-room and seemed to fill it up. It was a long room and the

doctor was not an excessively large man, yet he produced an effect of bulk and of force that filled space.

He bowed low and bowed repeatedly in response to the slowly uttered sentences of welcome which Maizie uttered on behalf of the quartette.

"Vait!" he said, shaking his head. He pressed a button in the wall impatiently.

"Say for me: Hurry!" he said when a little servant girl appeared.

The six people in the inn parlor waited awkwardly for whomever had been bidden to hurry. The double twins and Rhoda rightly guessed that it was an interpreter. Rhoda felt no temptation to offer to usurp the office.

When the interpreter appeared he proved to be a young man, a very young man, of not more than nineteen, with high color, bright blue eyes, a pleasant face, a booming rich voice and a laugh that was infectious.

"My sohn," the doctor introduced him, with a comprehensive wave toward the five young ladies before him whose identity he had not guessed, had he possessed the English to explain it.

But the son — Kurt Sweetair, he called himself, accepting enthusiastically the modified translation of his name — spoke English fluently, better than the double twins, if truth were told. He explained that this was because he had an English mother.

"Now that's fine; we had an English father, so

you're not a foreigner any more!" cried Taizie, issuing naturalization papers with a speed that Uncle Sam would never dare emulate.

The twins' explanation of the situation, that Doctor Porter had not been told of Doctor Sweetair's coming and why, was heard with interest by Kurt and repeated to his father in German that seemed to the double twins little short of miraculous from one who spoke English like a native.

Rhoda, watching with amused interest, saw Doctor Sweetair melt to his youthful new acquaintances and regard them with kindly humor in his German blue eyes, as their simplicity unconsciously revealed a great deal that they had not meant to say.

The introductory visit ended with a conditional appointment to visit Doctor Porter the following morning at eleven, the condition being dependent upon the double twins' ability to arrange for the meeting.

Kurt Sweetair put them into their car. Rhoda thought that he seemed bewildered by the unusual characteristics of these, his first American girl acquaintances. But she saw that he was also greatly charmed by them. It would have been duller eyes than Kurt Sweetair's keen ones which did not see that the double twins were wholesome, upright, kind, fine girls. If he had added "and lovable ones," he would not have been mistaken, though it was at first sight of them.

CHAPTER XVI

SECOND SIGHT

THE double twins could scarcely eat any of the tempting supper that Ceescy prepared for them that night. Excitement, the desire to settle the doubt of Doctor Porter's consenting to let Doctor Sweetair examine his eyes, made eating impossible.

It was only a few minutes after seven when Taizie sent out word to Elijah that they were ready to be taken down to Doctor Porter's, and they were at the Porter door when Mrs. Porter's little desk clock struck half past seven.

"Why, dear Double Twins, what is the reason for your perturbation?" asked the doctor, after the quartette had stammeringly gone through their salutations. "Even sightless I can see that you are disturbed. Nothing wrong, is there?"

The other three looked at Maizie. Compelled to reply by her customary office of spokeswoman, Maizie flushed scarlet and said:

"Perhaps there's something awful right. It's up to you, Doctor Porter, to make it right or wrong."

"Well, if that wasn't a relapse, Maizie!" laughed Nancy who, having her bright eyes to enlighten her, as well as her ears, saw what her father could not see, that the perturbation in the double twins' voices and manner did not indicate trouble. "Rhoda will get a fine for her jar! For the Slang-and-Grammar Slip jar, you know."

"It doesn't catch near half the fines it used to get; it needs a nickel," retorted Maizie. "Doctor Porter, wouldn't you want — not be willing, but *want* — to do something easy that would make us happy?"

"My lawyer has forbidden my answering questions which might incriminate myself," said Doctor Porter. "Beating around the bush is not a Coggs trait, Mistress Mary; quite the contrary! Whatever you want, tell me, and I'll gratify your desires within reason."

"Wouldn't you see a great German oculist, just to let him see if — if anything could be done?" Maizie blurted out, in a contrasting rush of words.

"Go to Germany, do you mean?" asked Doctor Porter surprised.

"No, oh, no; it's so easy!" Taizie took up the thread of pleading. "He's here, in Chagford."

"He's seeing the United States," Hazie interposed hastily, so hastily that it aroused the doctor's suspicions, and Mrs. Porter and Nancy exchanged glances.

"Seeing the United States? Well, much as we love Chagford, and know it to be worth seeing, it does not seem a likely place for a tourist to step aside to see. When did he come? Who is he?"

"He came last night, no, yesterday afternoon. Maybe you've heard of him — Doctor Sweetair?" Daisy joined in the explanation.

The doctor shook his head. "Sweetair? No. That isn't a German name — Oh! You couldn't mean Süssenluft? Doctor Hermann von Schwartzenwald-Süssenluft?"

"Yes, I could! We do," cried Taizie. "They say he's the greatest oculist in the world. And he's here. Won't you see him?"

"Since when have you double twins developed this amazing knowledge of European specialists?" asked Doctor Porter.

Already Nancy's fingers were fluttering in and out of one another as she twisted them, and her mother was leaning forward in her chair, with parted lips, drinking in the suggestion that any one might help her husband.

"We haven't," said Hazie. "But we heard that this Doctor Sweetair could cure almost any eye trouble." She did not realize that she had betrayed to the keen audience listening to her that their suspicions of the double twins' having a hand in the great doctor's coming were well founded.

"We translated his name; we couldn't say all that other. He has the nicest son! Speaks English as well as any one; his mother was English. He travels with his father to translate what he says. Wouldn't you like to see this doctor, Doctor Porter?"

"My dear, I should like to see any one!" said Doctor Porter with the twist of his lips which, before his affliction, accompanied the twinkle in his eyes. "Of course this specialist's opinion would be a Supreme Court decision on my case. But perhaps — more than probably — he would not take up practice when he is travelling for pleasure."

Quick-witted as she was, Maizie betrayed herself. "Yes, he would!" she cried. "He — we went to see him yesterday to ask him, before we spoke to you, and he said he would come here to-morrow at eleven, if you would let him."

"Oh, Mark, dear, pray don't hesitate!" cried Mrs. Porter.

"Oh, father, my daddy, let him come!" cried Nancy at the same instant.

Doctor Porter arose, holding out accusing, grateful hands to the twins.

"Children," he said, "there is more in this than you are telling us. Why did this doctor come to Chagford? Perhaps it is also: Why did he come to the United States? How did you know of him? How did you happen to go to him before coming to

me to arrange a meeting between us? Some day these questions must be answered. You have plotted; I think you have done more than that! But, for the present, it shall rest on your success. I will gladly let Doctor Schwartzenwald-Süssenluft examine my eyes. Sometimes I have myself wondered if there were a possibility of relief, not cure — modified blindness. I'm not going to thank you; not now. Are you to report to the doctor, or shall my secretary write him?" He laid his hand on Nancy's shoulder and she felt it tremble; the "secretary" herself quivered under the least hope of her father's cure.

"We'll stop on our way home. We must go this minute; it gets dark pretty early, still," said Maizie. "The doctor is stopping at Chagford Inn; we forgot to say."

The double twins went quietly out of the room, subdued by the triumph of an easy victory and profoundly stirred by the faint hope it held.

Mrs. Porter followed them and put them into the car. No one spoke, but the good night kiss which Mrs. Porter gave each glowing cheek was eloquent.

The next day Rick went down to the Chagford Inn to meet Doctor Sweetair and his son and take them to Doctor Porter. This was the arrangement that had been made over the telephone by the Coggs girls after they had reached home, having seen Doctor Porter.

Rick and the doctor's son were so nearly of an age

that they fell into easy comradeship, while the doctor walked silently with them, isolated by his mother tongue, possibly regretting that he had obstinately resisted his English wife's long pleading with him to master hers.

Kurt Sweetair understood Rick's mood that morning after Rick had told him that no son could love a father more than he loved Doctor Porter.

"And few sons' love is so justified," Rick added. "There's but one Doctor Porter in this world of all sorts! Even though there may be a Doctor Sweetair, as we're going to call you."

"Nice name, I'd be glad to use it permanently," said Kurt. "My father has made me knock about this world considerable, for a young chap; he believes in putting self-reliance into a boy as early as he can receive it. So I've seen a good deal of men's sons, and I know you and I are lucky to respect our fathers. It must be a fine thing to know one's son looks up to one, but it's bigger yet to be that son and see your father as great as you thought him when you about reached to his knee. By George, Mr. Lovering, it's all true that they tell us: Character *is* the thing!"

"Surest thing there is!" cried Rick. "But I'd rather you called me Rick, as all the rest do. In Chagford we keep boyish simplicity of manners a good while."

"Rather nice, too, unless there's somebody you

want to freeze up," laughed Kurt. "Rick it is, then, provided I'm Kurt. Awfully nice to get so at home in a strange land! I've taken marvellously to this quiet town of yours; rather like an English place, only the houses are newer."

"And yet we pride ourselves on being 'old Chagford!'" said Rick. "There's a blockhouse still standing where the settlers used to take refuge from the Indians."

"Really? But in England the savage neighbors have been so long one with the Danes, Saxons, Romans and Normans that there's no trace left of feuds."

So saying Kurt smiled and clapped his hand on Rick's shoulder. Rick knew that his own smile was forced. His face felt drawn; he understood that Kurt was entering into the anxiety with which he looked forward to Doctor Sweetair's verdict.

They came into the Porter house to find Mrs. Porter awaiting them. Her madonna type of beauty, the motherly look that was its most striking characteristic, instantly appealed to the big German, whose ideal woman was essentially a homemaker. Unconsciously Mrs. Porter looked at him imploringly as she gave him her hand.

"Madam, I will my best do," he said, and the few English words were an attempt complimentary to her.

Doctor Porter and Nancy were waiting in Nancy's beautiful new room.

When Doctor Sweetair saw Doctor Porter and his slender "assistant," when he saw the look on Nancy's pale face, the adoration in her earnest eyes as she turned from the strangers to look up into her father's sightless ones, the famous specialist was completely conquered.

"I'm truly glad to meet you and I fully appreciate your coming to me, Herr Doctor. I regret that my German parted from me at the college door, except a reading familiarity. I should like to tell you in your own tongue how well I know what you have done in your profession," said Doctor Porter heartily.

Doctor Sweetair looked appraisingly into the Chagford doctor's face and saw in him the quality of true greatness.

"I hope to do more, here," he boomed in his throaty bass which Kurt translated.

Then the two doctors departed together, leaving Mrs. Porter and Nancy to wait the result of an examination which the German specialist was to make at once. When they returned Mrs. Porter leaned forward, listening, then she started to her feet.

"They are hurrying, Nancy; your father would not hurry to bring us bad news," she cried.

There had been no pretence of conversation while mother and daughter waited; Kurt and Rick merely bore them company quietly, Rick with his arm around Mrs. Porter's shoulder, sonlike in attitude and anxiety.

Now Rick leaped to meet Doctor Porter, but checked himself to allow Mrs. Porter and Nancy to precede him.

Doctor Porter held out both hands and Nancy ran between them into his arms, as Mrs. Porter seized the outstretched hands.

"Mark?" she interrogated on a breath.

"Mildred, Nancy, Rick — where's Richie? — there's a chance!" cried the doctor. "It isn't more than that, and it doesn't include a cure, but there's a chance of relief, partial cure. If it were ever so small a part, one eye restored, and even that not wholly, but so I could see you again, my dear ones, oh, my dears —"

The doctor stopped short, and Nancy burrowed into his coat lapel with a sob. Mrs. Porter made no sound, but she laid her hands over the doctor's eyes and their clinging touch was a prayer for his healing.

"May we hear just what the doctor thinks the trouble is and what is the chance of curing it, sir?" asked Rick, after a moment's silence.

"If I were to tell you scientifically I'm afraid you would be no wiser," said Doctor Porter. "I've scant faith in your memories of the anatomy you learned in school."

"But we don't want to know science, M. D., my daddy," said Nancy. "We want to know its results; about you, that's all."

"Exactly. Is Doctor Sweetair's son here? You are to stay to lunch; your father is returning to lunch with us — right, Mildred? I thought Kurt Sweetair was making a move to go. Now, to resume Doctor Sweetair's diagnosis," Doctor Porter said, crossing to a chair upon the arm of which Nancy instantly perched.

"The oculists who examined my eyes in Boston did so immediately after the explosion, you know. This great German thinks there was a mistake made, owing to a part of the eye, which should be transparent, having become opaque. Doctor Sweetair feels sure that a minute bit of glass entered the eye, went through the cornea, imbedded itself in one of the rear chambers of the eye, rendered it opaque, preventing an accurate diagnosis, caused an abscess in behind the outer eye — you see how nicely I avoid terms which I really know professionally! — and made me blind. Doctor Sweetair believes that an operation, delicate, but not dangerous, would restore partial sight to the eye. You see I say: *Eye,* not eyes. There is no chance whatever for the left one; the sight of that one is totally destroyed, but there may be a little light and vision let into the retina of the right eye. That is his verdict."

"It isn't much," sighed Nancy disappointed.

"But it is something," cried her mother quickly.

"Surely it is," agreed the doctor. "I feel that the

operation is worth essaying, though the eye may never let me read a book again, if it will show me sunshine, grass, flowers, starlight and moonlight — and your faces."

"Oh, daddy dearest, yes, yes, of course it is!" cried Nancy. "I didn't mean to speak as though it weren't much. I couldn't help wanting all, but that would be a lot."

Mrs. Porter did not say anything. Eloquently silent she sat, lightly touching the back of her husband's hand as if he had been a child.

"When will it be, the operation, Mark?" she asked at last.

"The day after to-morrow. I shall be the first surgical patient in our new hospital. Don't you think that is suitable, since I suppose there's no doubt I have been its chief instigator and they have made me its head and named it St. Mark's, indirectly in my honor?" The doctor turned to Kurt Sweetair as he spoke, smiling happily.

"We must telephone the twins!" cried Nancy. "How could we forget? We promised to let them know the moment we knew ourselves what Doctor Sweetair said."

"And I must go to see if there is anything to give two Teutonic pilgrims for their lunch," added Mrs. Porter. "If you find lenten fare, be charitable to a perturbed hostess, Mr. Sweetair."

"Kurt," the young man corrected her. "A hostess who is imposed upon, rather. It's a shame to spring two big hungry creatures like father and me upon you, without warning. At least I had no hand in it; the two doctors did it."

Nancy paused on her way to the telephone. "Why, who interpreted for you while you were gone? Doctor Sweetair's son was here!" she cried.

Doctor Porter looked guilty. "I made an attempt at German again, and well, we pieced out with medical Latin! We weren't enjoying social intercourse," he explained.

Nancy announced the verdict to the double twins over the wire. They received it dubiously, hardly knowing whether to rejoice more over its not being completely adverse, or to regret more that the best that could happen to Doctor Porter was a partial recovery of sight.

The next afternoon Doctor Porter made ready to go to the hospital.

The double twins begged to be allowed to come after him in their car and drive him to St. Mark's. But Nancy would not allow this.

"Tonic and I are going to take him there, in the old surrey," she declared, "as we always take him, wherever he goes. You may be polite to the Sweetairs, senior and junior, drive the German doctor to St. Mark's, but not the Yankee one."

"Hazie is *very* polite to the junior Sweetair," observed Daisy significantly.

"Boomerang," declared Hazie nonchalantly, though her color mounted. "Boomerang politeness, I mean — he's just as polite to me, back again. Anyway, you couldn't be impolite to a young man who came out from Germany for no harm at all, just to interpret for his father."

"'I love little pussy, her coat is so warm
And if I don't hurt her she'll do me no harm,'"

sang Taizie.

"However, we all think the junior Sweetair is not merely a harmless young man; he's a decidedly nice young man, about the nicest there is."

"Except Tommy Giddings and Rick," said Maizie quietly.

Mrs. Porter put into his suitcase the things that Doctor Porter needed, not many, because he was not going far; St. Mark's was almost like an extension of the Porter house, the doctor being its head physician, visiting it daily.

Nancy waited her father's coming at the gate, his strapped suitcase already in the old surrey, Letty Hetty, Stephen, Bumblebee, Funny, Flip and Fred all at the gate to see their start. Nothing of importance happened in the Porter household that Letty Hetty and Stephen, so long its devoted servitors

and friends, did not share. The three cats and Nancy's dog were likely, also, to add themselves to family groups, apparently conscious of electrical conditions.

The doctor came out without guidance and got into the surrey as quickly as he could. He waved his hand carelessly to the little group, the human part of which prayed in their hearts as they called out a cheerful good-by.

"I'll be gone something less than a month, perhaps decidedly less, and then I hope I may come back to *see* you all," he said.

He turned his face toward the house knowing that his wife was hidden behind the curtains in the room where he had left her.

Tonic took his master to St. Mark's at a reminiscence of his youthful pace. They passed the double twins returning in their car, and knew that they had left Doctor Sweetair at the hospital.

"Look after the household and your mother, Doctorette," said Doctor Porter. "Rick is up here; I'll send him home presently. Good-by, Dame Trot. Nothing to worry over, in any case, you know; something to hope over, that's all. Good-by."

Nancy could not say the little word. Silently she turned old Tonic homeward, and if ever there were prayer wheels turned in India by suppliant hands then the wheels of the old surrey were prayer wheels, too,

for every inch of her slow drive homeward Nancy implored Heaven for her father's sight.

The operation was performed the next morning at half past nine. The skilful hands of the great German oculist, big, yet deft and delicately sure, took Doctor Porter's eye from its socket, made the swift, marvellous strokes with the knife that might remove its barrier to the light and replaced it — one of the wonderful acts of modern surgery.

Then the bandages were put into place, and Doctor Porter was left in the hands of the nurse to recover from the anæsthetic. It was over. Only a few moments' work, but for these few moments the great doctor had crossed the Atlantic and their fruit might be that the blind should see.

Not for several days could the result of the operation be known. Doctor Sweetair lingered in Chagford to see the end of his work. He seemed contented and to take kindly to the life of this quaint old town in which, among its old families, something of the simple, refined dignity of the early days of the Republic still prevailed.

Kurt was happier there than his father. He had grown enthusiastic over all things American. Mrs. Porter and Nancy wondered if it were possible that he were seriously attracted by one of the double twins, and, as Nancy said, "if he were, how he knew which one it was that attracted him."

All Chagford poured out proofs of affectionate gratitude upon Doctor Porter during these hospital days. His room would have been carpeted and papered and furnished with flowers, if he could have borne so much of their fragrance, and the delicacies that were sent for him to eat, "because," as everybody pleaded, "an operation on the eye did not prohibit jelly," were enough to have supplied all the patients in the hospital, if every bed, in every ward, were filled.

Ten days after the operation Doctor Sweetair began to hint of strong hope that it had been at least a partial success. Doctor Porter began to receive his friends, Nancy came and read to him for hours; the girls who had grown up with her, so much of the time under the doctor's roof, who adored him, Mimi, Doris, Cord, Amabel Willis, came to amuse him with their lively chatter.

Rick hung about the hospital all day, of course Mrs. Porter gave up all thought of anything else and spent her days with her husband.

But the double twins were the most manifestly attentive of anybody. Back and forth all day long Taizie, Maizie or Elijah Riggs drove the long silver colored car, from the palace to St. Mark's, over to the Misses Allaire to fetch them to see the doctor and home again, down into the town on a swift errand, till, as Elijah said to his brother, Doctor Por-

ter's man, Stephen, "it really didn't seem 'sif the Coggs wouldn't leave a road that wa'n't worn out in Chagford, let alone a tire on their wheels."

"Oh, Doctor Sweetair," cried Nancy one day, meeting the big German in the hall, "when shall we know?"

Doctor Sweetair understood English better than he spoke it, but of late he had actually been making funny attempts to speak it, which was the subtlest flattery to his American friends.

"Tiret, yaw?" he said. "Vill not batient vaitin longer sein? No? So-o! Vell, I dell you, tjess! Ve took 'em off heute, to-day, und see how deine vater's augen go, hein!"

"Oh, mercy!" cried Nancy, shocked by the unexpected answer.

She ran off as fast as she could to repeat the news to her mother and Rick. Then she telephoned the Coggs girls, first of all, because the Porters' suspicions grew daily stronger that the double twins had a great, unrevealed share in the coming of Doctor Sweetair.

Then she called up all her mates and the Misses Allaire and Grandma Emerson, that those who were Doctor Porter's closest friends and her own might share the excitement attending the definite announcement of the result of the operation.

Doctor Sweetair went into Doctor Porter's room alone, excluding everybody.

Mrs. Porter, Nancy and Rick waited just outside. The double twins had come, of course, bringing the Allaire sisters, and Nancy's girl friends had all come, or rather the four she knew and liked best.

Within the darkened room Doctor Sweetair removed the bandages and made the final examination of Doctor Porter's eye.

He turned to the nurse, who was a German.

"Tell him," he said, triumph in his voice, "that the operation is a success. He will see, not with full vision, never more than three-quarters sight, but he will see once more."

The girl started to translate, but Doctor Porter interrupted her.

"I understood," he said quietly. "Thank God. Doctor, please keep the rest out for a minute. Call my wife and little girl first, alone. I want my restored vision first to rest on them."

"*Natürlich!* Sure," boomed the German doctor, and because he was a German, not in the least ashamed of sentiment, he did not mind the tears that dropped into his moustache, which curled fiercely upward in the most loyal copy of the Kaiser William's.

He went out, faced the group of waiting friends with a beaming smile.

"It iss goot," he announced. "He will see, not so goot wie a not-hurted eye; ganz gewiss, it iss not possibly. Aber he see goot, gut genug. Come, Frau

Doktor, come, kleine Fraulein Nannchen. *Sie must die ersten sein, bitte.*"

Doctor Sweetair did not know that he had fallen away from his struggle to speak English; he forgot all language but the things which Mrs. Porter's eyes and Nancy's said as they followed him.

He opened Doctor Porter's door and pushed them in, closed it and mounted an unnecessary guard outside.

Doctor Porter held out his arms.

"This is what I hope to see when I open my eyes after death," he said. "Mildred, Nancy, I see you, I see you! I am always to see you now!"

CHAPTER XVII

SHEARING THE PALACE

DOCTOR PORTER'S cure, or rather his permanent improvement, was an established fact. He had been at home again for nearly a month. Chagford was beginning to get accustomed to its pleasure in seeing him once more walking its streets unattended, to nodding and smiling to him and receiving a nod and a smile in return without its being necessary to salute him by a word in order to let him hear his neighbor's voice for his identification.

If all the three Chagfords and everybody in them were glad that the doctor had received back again so much of what he had lost, the rejoicing was intensified in the case of the double twins, partly because they loved the doctor better than most, but chiefly because they hugged to their hearts the knowledge that to them this joy was due.

But — for like most earthly things there was a "but" in the thought of it — it was the Coggs girls who must pay the penalty of Doctor Porter's gain.

They were more than willing to do this; even sacrifices, if they must be made, they would make gladly for the sake of the three Porters, but the question was how to do this and not let the Porters suspect that it was done.

"You see, if we go to cutting out anything now the doctor will be right on to us," said Taizie, so disconsolately that Rhoda did not raise her eyebrows in her established danger signal which meant: "'Ware Slang!"

"We'd feel like cripples without the car, but we could get along, only if we sold it now, just after Doctor Sweetair was imported, Doctor Porter would be wise to us and he'd never in this world let us stand thousands, nor hundreds, nor dollars, nor even cents for him."

"'Course not," said Daisy. "It's got to be done somehow inside, so it won't show on the outside."

"Well, how?" demanded Maizie, adding with entire truth: "The inside is all outside in a little town."

"Couldn't we just keep on paying interest to Mr. Dillingham and shear the palace slowly, so we could pay a little off at a time?" suggested Daisy.

"I don't think Mr. Dillingham wants to let it drag like that," said Maizie.

"If we sold the car we'd lose a lot and, what's more than money, we'd lose Elijah. I want Elijah; he's more than a chauffeur, he's a sure-for-anything-

we need! I suppose you girls will laugh, but I never have felt so fatherless since we got that nice, care-taking, kind, plain-but-hidden gentleman to take us around. He's not like a hired man; he's like a kind, plain farmer you might be boarding with, if you ever went boarding on a farm." Hazie took great, though not necessary pains to make her position to Elijah Riggs clear.

"Sure; that's the way we all feel," said Taizie. "Couldn't we keep Elijah? I suppose there wouldn't be any sense in it, if the car went. Nothing would be more noticed than selling the car. How about the jewelry we have? Maybe we could get some one to sell it for us. I suppose we'd be cheated like fun if we went to selling diamonds and things."

"Dear Double Twins, even if you did any of these things you would still not have discharged the debt," said Rhoda. "Why not carry all of it, at least long enough to see what happens?"

"Because, Rhoda, we have to pay part of it soon. Mr. Dillingham said so," said Maizie. "The jewelry is our best way. Who'll we send it to?"

"Mr. Carberry?" suggested Daisy.

"I suppose," agreed Maizie doubtfully. "He's a lawyer; I don't know whether he would know how to sell jewelry or not."

"He'd be sharp to see it was a right price; he'd probably get some one to tell him. I guess he'd be all

right. Let's go get it together. Maizie must write Mr. Carberry. Look out you don't let him guess what's up; he sure is sharp!" Taizie was on her feet, eager to do at once what must be done.

In the meantime the three Porters were discussing their strong suspicion of the double twins' responsibility for Doctor Sweetair's visit to the United States, their fear that it was not merely the responsibility of the plot, but of its cost that lay at the Coggs' door.

"You know, Mildred and Assistant," Doctor Porter said, "it is quite unbearable to imagine that these children are doing such a thing! It must not be. We would rather sacrifice all Nancy's inheritance, if need be, than to allow it, would we not?"

"Needless to ask, Mark," said Mrs. Porter.

"It wouldn't be much sacrifice to exchange any amount of money for your seeing ever so little," said Nancy.

"It will come out, if it is so," said Doctor Porter. "We shall be able to restore the money, but how about the generous love, the devotion to us? The dear, loyal, loving children! There are debts which are never paid. Not in this life."

"Except in kind," Mrs. Porter reminded him. "The double twins feel that we have all helped them to learn and to be, and they know we are fond of them. They are so simple and genuine that I think they truly reckon only real things; they reckon love,

not cost; not material things, but greater ones. I wish everybody reckoned that way. After all, what we really owe people is the love that prompts an action; not the actual, material cost of it. We owe that sort of debt for what we buy, where no love is involved."

"Well, Mildred, I can't say I think you have measured life by any other standard than the one you like in the Coggs twins. In fact I think you have done your full share in keeping them unworldly. But we'll square all accounts, if we can, let no one lose through us, either in love and gratitude, nor in their purse. I wish I could hope that Sweetair would betray them, but I know he won't." Doctor Porter frowned over the problem of how to surprise what he called: "The twins' guilty secret."

Doctor Sweetair certainly did not betray the twins. Whatever arrangement had been made between them he was going back to Germany with its terms a secret. Was there another secret concerning the twins and the great doctor, or, rather, Kurt Sweetair?

Nancy, consumed with justifiable curiosity, hinted her desire to be told this, after the Sweetairs, father and son, had gone. The double twins, as well as the Porters, had been seeing them off at the Chagford station, and Nancy had gone home with the Coggs girls, all of them pensively quiet, for partings are depressing. Hazie was downright melancholy.

"We want to know, too, Nancy," Maizie said. "We don't, though! Hazie, couldn't you give us a hint — whether Kurt is too afraid of seasickness to cross again, for instance?"

Hazie smiled, a wan sort of smile, then decided not to be sentimental and untwins-like, and laughed.

"I guess he'll risk another ocean voyage, some day," she said. "Goodness knows, if he eats things like sauerkraut and — and all those German funny cookings, he ought not to be afraid of seasickness!"

"Maybe his home cooking takes after his mother's side, isn't German, but English," suggested Taizie. "Hazie, you're my own special twin; tell me what Kurt said and what you said, and, while you're telling, let the other twins and Nancy hear, because they're positively bursting interested!"

"Well," Hazie hesitated, then again made up her mind to be her usual frank self, laughed, and began with what soon developed into unembarrassed enjoyment. "If a boy thinks he likes a girl, I guess there's no use in arguing with him. I told Kurt he couldn't like me so much, because he couldn't be sure it wasn't one of the others. But he declared he could tell me apart, so — what can you do?"

"Be told apart!" cried Nancy. "What was it he told you, Hazie?"

"I guess they all tell you the same thing," said

Hazie, a great blush losing itself in the rings of bright hair that lay damp on her forehead, for the May day was warm and she had just taken off her automobile bonnet. "I never had any other boy tell me how nice he thought I was, so, of course, I don't know, but in stories it comes out about the same. Kurt said we were all four the jolliest girls he'd ever known and the nicest, that I was a little the nicest of the Coggs bunch, and he wanted me to write to him. He wanted me to tell him I liked him better than any one in the world, but I told him I didn't, and what's more I didn't see how I ever could like a perfect stranger better than the girls who'd been twinning and sistering me ever since I was born. And he said he didn't mind how much I liked the other three-quarters of me, but what he wanted was to know that I wouldn't ever like any other boy as much as him. And I told him I might just as well try to promise not to catch chicken-pox; I liked him now, and I was willing to say that I didn't see how I'd ever like any one else as well, because we Coggs were regular Bunker Hill monuments for standing still in one place. I wouldn't say one word more, and he had to go off satisfied. I guess he's not so silly but he can see that it isn't always the most sputter that cooks best. No use trying to make a whole lot of promises for by and by — like an almanac, setting down the weather a whole year ahead and maybe hitting it and maybe not."

"But, Hazie," interposed Maizie, with the elder sisterly air that sat so amusingly on her almost identical age and face, differing not a hair's breadth from the others of the Coggs quartette. "Hazie, is that an engagement?"

"'Course not!" declared Hazie promptly. "He wanted me to promise I'd marry him some day, but I told him: Kurt von Schwartzenwald-Süssenluft — and that's a name to stop any one from such a promise — Kurt Sweetair, I said, I'm seventeen years old and that's too young to promise anything that lasts as long as being married. Besides, you haven't been home yet and seen your mother. You go home. You haven't taken a long distance squint at me, either. People look different by long distance, sometimes. You go back to Germany and see what you think of the Coggs twins when you get there, 'specially Hazie. I'll write you, and I like you a lot, but that's the very most you'll get me to say, so run along over the gangplank, little Dutch Hans, and we'll see." Hazie ended her quotation of herself with manifest relish of what had been her mastery of the situation.

The other three girls and Nancy clapped their hands and laughed and laughed.

Nancy saw that Maizie and Daisy were relieved that Hazie's dawning romance remained at dawn. They dreaded the nearer approach of romance to any of them.

Hazie had answered Kurt Sweetair wisely, prudently, which also pleased them.

"It might be worse!" sighed Maizie, and they all laughed again.

"Strange," said Daisy, glancing sidewise at Taizie, "that the younger pair of twins has been the first to get, well, not engaged; thank goodness, you two aren't engaged! But have a sort of a track laid on which you may run into getting married some day! I don't trust Taizie and Tommy Giddings one bit more than Hazie and Kurt Sweetair; not as much!"

"Tommy and I like each other, we know it. We aren't going to be engaged yet, but we know we shall be, and we wouldn't marry any one else for all the wealth of a Poll Condor," said Taizie calmly.

The other four girls shouted. "Oh, Taizie, you will be the death of me!" gasped Nancy, wiping her eyes. "It's Golconda, the rich mines, you know, not a sort of condor-parrot!"

"What's the dif?" inquired Taizie. "Just a way of saying big money; it doesn't mean more one way than the other, if you say it hard enough. And, just as we happen to be on the subject, Daize, I wouldn't be too sure that jolly young reporter, Despard Longacre, wouldn't be a bad bet, if any one wanted to bet he wouldn't try to steal our little Daisybud! And he's got the most dressy name of the three,

though it wouldn't be fair to blame Kurt for his last name."

Daisy looked uncomfortable; she minded being accused of a possible romance more than the others did.

"Only poor old Maize left out in this distribution," she said, rallying, "and she's the best package in our grabbag."

"If you all ever should be married I'd have to be left out, or there wouldn't be any Coggs girl, and that would certainly be a pity," said Maizie, with a smile that did not disguise her dread of the day when they should be young girls no longer, their quartette divided off into four duets, or possibly solos. "And Nancy—" Maizie checked herself.

She and Mrs. Porter had once discussed the likelihood that Rick and Nancy's love for each other, dating from childhood, now the most perfect brotherly and sisterly devotion, would one day blossom into another sort of love. Nancy's mother had charged Maizie not to let its unfolding be hastened by a hint to either of her children, so now Maizie checked herself at the unspoken word.

"And Nancy," Nancy herself took up the suggestion, "will live close to Maizie, if Maizie is left alone, for Nancy is going to be the Doctor's Assistant all her life, you know. Of course, splendid as it is to have daddy dearest see as much as he does now, still,

I shall always have to read to him and help him a good deal. Do you know, I'm rather glad of that. I should be sorry not to be necessary to him. Maybe that's selfish; I don't feel selfish when I say it. I have loved his leaning on me, even while it killed me to see him blind."

"There is no chance of your not being necessary to him, Nancy girl," said Maizie. "If your father could not see, you would have to help him. If he does see what would there be worth looking at for him if you weren't around?"

"That was a nice thing to say, Maizie, and it's true," said Nancy rising. "When you're an only child of course you *are* an only child, and your own can't get on without you. I must go home. It was the most interesting talk! It seems rather awful to think of three of the double twins sort of slipping toward — toward, well, toward doubling still more!"

"Slipping their cogs?" suggested Taizie with her ringing laugh. "We're not going to be anything but young girls, if we have to be 'em by main force, not yet a while!"

The next day the mail brought a brief letter from Mr. Carberry.

"I shall keep the jewelry which you have sent me till I hear further as to your wish to sell it. With the income which has been settled upon you there can be no conceivable reason why you should need more

money, unless you have been more than extravagant, or have used your income for other purposes than the support for which your grandfather intended it. I am writing by the same mail to Mr. Debbs for instructions. If he bids me, I will go to Chagford at once to see you, to help you, if I can do so without injustice."

Maizie read this letter aloud, consternation deepening on her face as she read.

"Well, what — do — you — know — about —" Taizie could get no further.

"The pig!" cried Daisy. "Wasn't the jewelry ours?"

"Whoever thought he'd make a row! If only we hadn't done it! We could have got Tommy Giddings to take it to sell for us. He'd have done it and, if we had to tell him why, he'd have kept it to himself, if we made him swear to!" Hazie added.

"But he's going to write, he has written Grandfather Debbs! He knows it now!" Maizie gasped. "What'll he do to us? What will he think? Suppose he gets mad and cuts us off? We'd lose the house, because Mr. Dillingham would have to have that for the loan; we couldn't sell it, or anything! We'd be poor! Poor again, like before, only worse, because we've got used to being rich."

"If we had to be poor for any sensible reason! We'd stand it, if we had to be poor to cure Doctor

Porter, but just for nothing at all, without finding out one thing about us!" Daisy cried.

"But you don't know that you are to be cut off," protested Rhoda. "I'm sure it will work out right in the end. Don't jump at conclusions, twinsies!"

"Here comes some one, looks like a letter in his hand. From Grandfather Debbs, don't you believe?" said Hazie from the window.

It was. A maid offered the note to Miss Drummond and withdrew.

"No, please read it, Rhoda; I've read enough," said Maizie, refusing the note with a gesture of dread.

Rhoda read the few lines which the note contained, written in a cramped hand, evidently by one to whom note-writing was unaccustomed torture.

"To the Coggs Girls:" it began, and, hearing this salutation, the four Coggs girls groaned. "If you spend so much after all I give you that you go to trying to sell things, you do not deserve having me support you, and I won't. I always knew you would not amount to anything, but I won't support spenders, for you can't spend right more than I give you. You will not get any more money but what you earn. Yours respectfully, Peter Debbs."

"Oh, my gracious! 'Yours respectfully,' to such a letter!" Taizie laughed hysterically. "It's dreadful, awful! But isn't he a funny old Peter!"

"He's all of that, but there's nothing funny about what he's done," groaned Maizie.

"And we can't do one thing to explain, or Doctor Porter will pay his own bill," added Daisy sadly.

"What shall we tell him?" asked Hazie.

"Just that grandfather has given us up. I suppose we'd have to say he thought we were too extravagant. Then we might say we'd always been afraid he'd get tired of the bargain, because we have been scarey — till lately! We'd begun to feel safe," Taizie checked herself, finding her voice unsteady.

"Well, let's go and tell him," said Hazie. "He won't know anything about it more than we say and that's enough, what Taizie just said. I've got to get down to the Porters and tell them we're poor again. I can't stand trouble unless I tell it to the Porters. I wonder what work we can get in Chagford? Not the mills again, because Grandfather Debbs owns them. We couldn't leave here now. We never had a home and real people, except here. And the best of them won't like us less because we're poor. They've all excused our crazy ways, before we had Rhoda and them to teach us, so they'll excuse our losing everything, because our ways and talk were worse than being poor. Come on. Let's ask the doctor and Mrs. Porter what to do."

The double twins arose and made ready for their walk. By an unspoken understanding they did not

dress for the car. Now that the fine car was not to be theirs they could not begin to walk too soon.

"Did you walk down?" asked Nancy, by way of greeting when she ran to let them in. Rhoda had stayed at home, in reality because she wanted to be alone to go over the situation in her mind, to try to discover a way to avert the misfortune that was overtaking these dear girls who so thoroughly deserved good fortune for the way they had met their promotion in the world, their unfailing goodness to every one.

"Where's the car? Girls, what's wrong?" cried Nancy as the light fell on the four faces, so alike in feature, now alike in their sorrowful expression.

"We came down to tell you all," said Taizie, preceding Nancy to the library. Here they quietly greeted Mrs. Porter, and waited while Nancy called her father and Rick, for the double twins said they wanted the entire household to hear what they had come to say.

When the audience had assembled Maizie, the spokesman, told them that they had been deprived of all that they had acquired. It was a story of but few words, but it left its hearers breathless.

"Dear children, why?" cried Mrs. Porter, greatly disturbed.

"Oh, well, Grandfather Debbs thinks we're extravagant," said Taizie with elaborate carelessness. "Of

course it isn't as though we hadn't been sort of afraid he would drop us some day. We did overdraw, and we thought we'd sell some stuff; rings and things. We sent them to Mr. Carberry and he told on us."

The girls had decided, coming down, that as much as this must be told; if Mr. Carberry did come to Chagford and talked to the doctor, as he would, it would arouse suspicion for them to make it a secret.

"We'll have the money from the car and lots of things we can sell, to start on," Taizie added carelessly.

"And the house," said Doctor Porter, scanning the double twins' faces as keenly as his twilight vision allowed.

"Well, maybe not," said Maizie, embarrassed by this unexpected thrust at her defences; it was important not to betray that the palace was pledged to Mr. Dillingham. "I guess, maybe, we can't sell the palace. But we can shear it and it will give us lots of wool! Funny, we've been talking so long about shearing the palace of its fancy towers and things, and making it really nice, and now we've got to shear it to sell what we cut off!" Maizie tried to laugh, but it was not a merry laugh.

"I hardly think matters will be as bad as you expect, my dears," said the doctor. He and his wife glanced at each other with thorough understanding. "I think your grandfather may be convinced that

you are anything but spendthrifts, that he may reinstate you in your just dues, proudly proclaiming you fine young granddaughters, though foolish ones. How much did you offer Schwartzenwald-Süssenluft to come over here and examine me, Taizie?"

Doctor Porter spoke rapidly, leaning forward the better to look into the face of the twin whom he had selected for his question because she would least of all know how to prevaricate.

"We! Offer Doctor Sweetair? Why, he came, he wanted to see the country! And you paid his operation charge, Doctor Porter." Taizie floundered badly, her face a purple red, her manner more guilty than an arrested thief's.

Doctor Porter slowly shook his forefinger at the double twins.

"I was suspicious from the first," he said. "I've been waiting; I knew the secret would out. You offered the specialist a large sum of money, thousands, for he would not have come for less, to cross the ocean to examine me. To meet this, you have pledged the palace. Being short of ready money, you have tried to sell your jewelry, and Mr. Carberry has reported to Mr. Debbs, as he was bound to do, though I wish he had first come here to investigate. Your grandfather, not understanding how you have spent so recklessly, cuts you off altogether. How is this for a deduction of facts? Can you deny the facts,

dear, foolish little tawny-haired ostriches, hiding your shining heads and expecting the sands would cover them?"

The double twins made inarticulate sounds, but they were truthful in their very fibre; their attempted blustering "whys" and "ohs," and "For pity's sakes" could not take the place of a flat denial of the charge.

"Very well. This Sherlock Holmes, M. D., will at once wait upon old Peter Debbs and make him see justice. Old Peter is my patient, really fond of me, I know. He will swing from anger against you, to proud admiration when he learns what you have done. Though, mind, Donna Quixotes, you must never do anything of this sort again! I shall pay the sum for which you have mortgaged the palace, your grandfather will continue your income — I am much mistaken if he does not feel more kindly to you than he has before — and all will go as merry as a marriage bell! By the way, Hazie, when this story is told to the Sweetairs, father and son, and they learn how you twin girls can love your friends, don't you think they will say to each other: Poor or rich, red gold in her pockets, or only red gold on her bare head, a big-hearted girl of that sort is a rare prize for a man to win, for her power to love is a dower beyond rating?"

The double twins sprang up and threw their arms

around the doctor and Mrs. Porter, kissing them both and crying. They threw off all disguise at the same instant. They were discovered and they were both glad and sorry, but the relief in the prospect of being spared utter denuding was undeniably great.

Doctor Porter took the hat and stick that Nancy offered him.

"Come, Rick, walk with me," he said. "Did any man ever go on such an embassy? Conceive of four slips of girls wrecking themselves that an old fellow like me might see again and be spared paying his own salvage! We'll right this wrong; I've only been waiting the hour. Come, Rick. Double twins, telephone for Elijah to come down after you, for there's no need of your rehearsing the loss of the long silver car that is your joy."

CHAPTER XVIII

SHARING THE PALACE

DOCTOR PORTER and Rick parted company at old Peter Debbs' door. The doctor was ushered into the old man's presence. He found him looking particularly old, and appearing particularly grumpy, for, though he acknowledged it to no one, not even to himself, he had been watching his granddaughters' career from afar and taking a certain surly pride in their generosity to others, their combination of a love of splendor with common sense in their own life. It annoyed him to feel obliged to condemn them for an extravagance which must represent actual wrong expenditures, and to cast them off.

"Ah-h," he growled at the doctor as he entered. Then he promptly added: "If you've come to talk about the Coggs girls, I don't want to hear it."

"Sorry for that," said Doctor Porter calmly as he laid his hat and stick on one chair and seated himself on another. "Truth to tell, I've come for your own

sake, Peter Debbs; I've seen serious symptoms in you."

"That's your way of meaning those twins," said Mr. Debbs. "I know you, doctor."

"It's a great thing to know some one, Mr. Debbs," said Doctor Porter. "Not an easy matter. So many hidden causes and meanings lie hidden away in every soul that it's a difficult thing to be sure of knowing any one. It's sure you never will know any one unless you cultivate the habit of hearing two sides of the stories which float in on you. I never should dare diagnose a case I hadn't seen because a symptom had been reported to me."

"This isn't Sunday, nor you ain't a preacher," said Peter Debbs, though his liking for Doctor Porter echoed through his speech and modified his growl.

"Great thing, again, to get two kinds of treatment from one man, instead of incurring indebtedness to two distinct professions," commented Doctor Porter with unimpaired good nature. "However, I don't blame you for objecting to an unsolicited sermon; I should, myself. So we won't fence; it isn't like either of us. I've come to tell you that you've done wrong, wholly wrong, to condemn your grandchildren without an investigation. Any of us could have told you that they were not using your money in a way you would not approve. Please don't interrupt me; listen. Those children have been childishly generous and im-

practical, but not worse. They've run into debt, mortgaged their home, risked your displeasure, all for what? That I might see! Yes," added Doctor Porter as Peter Debbs uttered an exclamation, "I owe my cure, as far as it is, or can be, a cure, to them. Let me tell you the story."

Peter Debbs had settled back into his chair, a variety of expressions racing across his old face, relief and incredulity predominating.

Doctor Porter told the story of the double twins' devotion to him and told it well; no one could have heard it without feeling that, though the Coggs girls were grown up to young womanhood, they were at heart nothing else but inexperienced children, with children's capacity for devotion to those they love and reckless indifference to consequences in a good cause.

"Well, I will be blessed!" said Peter Debbs when the story ended.

"Don't you mean the twins will be blessed?" asked Doctor Porter smiling. "Peter Debbs, there aren't bigger-hearted, truer, purer, more honest girls on earth than these four grandchildren of yours, whose delightful companionship your contrary folly has lost to you. They are as full of fun as a nut is of meat, bright, kindly, funny, lovable. Mrs. Porter and my Nancy are as fond of them as they can be; so am I. We count them one of our great pleasures. It is in-

conceivable that you have cut yourself off from such a source of joy, but, at least, I could not allow you to cut them off from their joys."

"I'll keep on giving them, same's ever, more, mebbe," said old Peter Debbs. "You can tell 'em to count on the same's they've been getting. Hold on; I'll give 'em a check, each of 'em a check, for a present, extra, and let you take it to 'em. They may want something right off. Tell 'em it's all right, and I say they did a good thing, only they mustn't get the habit of doing good things, without knowing how to be businesslike. I'll pay back that loan of Mr. Dillingham's, so's their house won't be mortgaged, no sense in that, and let 'em start square."

Doctor Porter shook his head. "Not that, Mr. Debbs," he said. "That is my debt; I shall square that account."

"I'd rather; I want to," said Peter Debbs eagerly. "I'd like to, for your sake's well's the girls'. I've always known I owed you a lot for the things you done when I was a heap younger'n I am now and you was not much more'n a boy. I want to pay off that mortgage."

"Can't be, Mr. Debbs," said the doctor decidedly. "A man must meet his obligations, you know. Anything you want to do for me, do for your grandchildren and I'll consider it done for me. Glad I found you here, and more than glad to go away knowing

you see the Coggs girls as they are. Perhaps this investment of theirs will make you, as well as me, see; who knows?"

"Well, I'm willing to admit they're better girls than I thought for, and they've turned out better'n most poor girls would, gitting sudden rich," said old Mr. Debbs. "I guess when I settled a big income on 'em first off, I did it to see what there was into 'em, and I'm ready to own up I didn't think they'd stand it, thought they'd fly off one way or 'nother. But I guess my doing stops with money. I'll finish up alone, same's I've lived. If it's any satisfaction to you, I don't mind promising I'll look up anything more I hear before I act on it. Oh, and I wish you'd telegraph Carberry not to come, that it's all right and to express up what he's holding. No need to telegraph the word 'jewelry;' you never can tell who'll read a thing like that."

"Very well, Mr. Debbs, I'll send the telegram, sign your name. We haven't spoken of yourself. Are you well? Don't need Doctor Mark Porter to prescribe, as well as preach, do you?" The doctor had risen and stood leaning on his cane, smiling down on the seamed old face which was raised to his, old Peter having kept his seat.

"I don't know," he said wistfully. "I don't know, some days, and then again I *don't* know! I ain't sick, but I feel funny, have considerable pain 'most every-

wheres there is for a pain to come — nerves, I guess. Truth to tell, I'm getting on, doctor; eighty's where I can see it 'thout a spy glass. I don't s'pose I'd oughter expect to feel eighteen."

"None of us can; I don't, and I'm a generation behind you on the road," said the doctor. "I'll look in on you professionally in a day or so, in a friendly way, and perhaps I can drive out some of the pain, from some of its haunts. Good-by. I'm glad we had our talk. I'll send the telegram to Mr. Carberry on my way, and I'll see the twin girls at once, tell them the good news and give the checks to them. It ought to be like a glass of port wine to you, warming all your veins, to know that in an hour or so the twin grandchildren will be as happy as they have been cast down. Good day to you, Mr. Debbs, and better days to come."

Great was the double twins' rejoicing when Doctor Porter returned from his embassy.

"Come on and hug the palace!" cried Taizie, seizing her own twin's hand.

The four absurd girls made a linked chain and danced all around, completely encircling the big palace, which they explained was "hugging it to show it how glad they were it was not going to be sold."

"We'll get an architect right away and let him draw how it ought to be, to be a real fine house, in good

taste," cried Maizie. "We'll shear it as soon as we can, the way we first planned to shear it, now we won't have to shear it the other way — like a sheep to get its wool. I wonder if it's glad to stay on with us! I think houses get used to their families; they must."

"Then I'll bet ours thinks it's a circus tent!" cried Hazie.

"Poor old Peter Debbs, grandfather!" said Daisy thoughtfully. "It sounds sad to hear of him alone, seeing eighty with his naked eye, coming around the corner! I wish we could let some of the twins' fun jump over into his pasture."

Kind wishes may make themselves fulfilled, some people hold. At least Daisy's wish found its opportunity, and sooner than she expected.

Three days passed after the double twins had been reinstated. They were days filled to overflowing with happiness, the happiness of a great relief.

The double twins felt as though they had been endowed with fabulous wealth, increased a hundredfold by its restoration when they had been bracing themselves to do without it altogether. They built castles in Spain enough to have crowded Castile and Aragon and made it necessary for Columbus to discover another world for Spanish territory to accommodate them.

In imagination they disbursed fortunes, built asy-

lums, educated poor girls, fed the starving, feeling as though unlimited power to do all these beautiful things had been conferred upon them, though not more than a small fraction of them were within their compass.

Doctor Porter had discharged the palace from its responsibility for the cost of his cure. This was a thorn in the riotous blossoming of the twins' happiness, but among their day dreams was a favorite one of making this up to him in some undefined way.

On the fourth day after Doctor Porter had explained away their grandfather's wrath, Doctor Ganson, the chief physician at Chagford Falls, drove over to see the double twins.

"I thought it my duty to come to you at once," he said. "I was called in to see your grandfather, Mr. Debbs, last night, because there was not time to send for Doctor Porter, who, as you know, is his physician. Mr. Debbs has had a stroke. It is not a severe one; he will be almost as well as he was before it happened in a short time. Almost, but not quite. There is no saying when this may happen again, nor how serious another paralytic stroke might prove. He is very hale and strong, for so old a man, yet in every case years have done their work, however they hide it. I am going on to see Doctor Porter, but you have the first claim to know that your grandfather is growing rapidly feeble."

Doctor Ganson, his errand done, drove away. He left a disturbed quartette of girls. What ought they do? What would their grandfather wish them to do?

"He wouldn't want one of us to go there to keep house for him, would he? He wouldn't come here to let us look after him, would he? Oh, dear; ought we to have him here? Wouldn't it be rather awful, when we don't know him and do know about him?" Maizie fairly groaned.

"A cranky old man and sick! We'd never dare be silly and jolly again!" said Taizie.

"But it looks as though we ought to ask him; what do you say, Rhoda?" asked Daisy.

"It doesn't seem to admit discussion, does it?" said Rhoda gently. "What are we told about him who refuses compassion to his brother in his need? And this is your mother's father, to whom you owe all you enjoy. Poor old Mr. Debbs! He has been standing in his own sunshine for many a day and now the shadow has fallen! It may not be so bad having him to look after. Perhaps he will like your nonsensical pranks. He can have a room far off in the western wing, where he can be quiet. You can have a nurse for him, if need be. I wouldn't dread it too much."

"Did you ever notice, twinsies, that when Rhoda thinks we ought to do a thing she speaks as if it were

settled, as if she were sure we'd play up?" hinted Taizie. "Well, Rhoda-Reformer, we aren't so killing hard-hearted, and if poor old Grandfather Petey is ready to be done for, we'll do him! We've always been pretty good kids at swallowing doses and you won't see us wink over this one. We'll offer to adopt him, won't we, twinsies?"

"Go right over," agreed Maizie. "We'll tell him: Grandfather, here are four perfectly good grandchildren ready to take care of you and jolly you along. Come and be jollied! There's one thing: he must know we aren't after anything in making the offer, because he has given us all we want. And he must know, if he stops to think, that lively girls can't want to adopt an old man who never has been willing so much as to look at them. So I should think it would please him a lot to be asked. What shall we wear?"

Thus it was settled, quicker than most unimportant decisions are made, that the double twins were to adopt their grandfather into the happy household at the palace.

Elijah drove them over to see the old gentleman that night.

They found him willing to receive them, and this was in itself a great change. No one knew precisely what to say when they entered. Fortunately Peter Debbs' cat broke the ice by sailing into the room with pride written on every stiffened muscle and on her

waving tail, her head thrown back and in her mouth a particularly large rat, which she deposited, as a courteous attention, at Maizie's feet.

Maizie neither jumped nor screamed, instead she stroked the cat and praised her, to old Peter's satisfaction. It happened that he especially disliked jumpy, screaming girls, and especially liked his cat; Maizie had been given a short cut to his approval.

"Ain't afraid of rats, eh? Like cats?" he said.

"Not afraid of dead rats," said Maizie with the infectious laugh that was the lucky gift of each twin. "And there aren't many things I like better than a nice cat."

"They're animals worth respecting; you can look up to a cat. They won't call any man master, but they like the one they like. Mrs. Bemis is a fine cat; I'm proud of her. Sit down, can't ye?" said old Peter fretfully.

"Mrs. Bemis! What a funny name for a cat!" exclaimed Hazie as the double twins accepted the invitation and found chairs.

"Better'n Minnie and Daisy and such foolish names. I got her from a Mrs. Bemis; that's why. One of you is named Daisy — which?" asked their grandfather.

"Margaret I'm named, grandfather," said Daisy. "We all have sensible names, unless Hazel is a little fancy, but we've always been nicknamed."

There was a pause and the old man looked from one to the other of the four girls, appraising them, vainly endeavoring to detect differences. He held his right hand in his left, rubbing the paralyzed fingers; the paralysis had been a light stroke, confined to the right hand.

"Grandfather Debbs," said Maizie suddenly, ending the embarrassing silence, "we don't want you to stay here alone, with only hired people to look after you. We live in a great house — thanks to you — we're easy to get on with, we will do every earthly thing you want us to do for you and try not to do what you don't like. Come home; it's really your home, you know. Come home with us, to stay. Come home. We came to say this."

"We certainly did. We're not bad when you know us. Come," Daisy supplemented her.

"We're like Mrs. Bemis, we're pretty independent, but we like the ones we like," Taizie chimed in.

"Just come home and let us be the real thing in grandchildren," said Hazie.

Old Peter Debbs flushed the painful flush of old age. Tears came in his eyes.

"Suppose it comes again, worse?" he said, holding up the affected hand.

That touched the easily melted hearts of that loving quartette of girls.

"It won't, but if it did, you'd need us!" cried Taizie, and she ran over to the old man and patted his shoulder.

"Then we'd have dead loads of fun waiting on you!" cried Maizie, joining Taizie on her grandfather's other side.

"We haven't one soul but ourselves belonging to us, no one to take care of!" said Hazie, trying to be pathetic and failing, but crossing over like the other two to hang over her grandfather's chair.

"We'd love to pay back a little of what you've done," said Daisy completing the wreath of hovering granddaughters.

The crabbed old man could not withstand their sweetness. He actually touched Taizie's cheek with his withered left hand.

"Good girls!" he said huskily. "I'd have to bring Mrs. Bemis."

"There's room enough in the palace for Mrs. Bemis to bring up twelve kittens a year and catch all the rats in China to give them," cried Maizie. "And we're simply daffy about all animals! When'll you come; now? Better come right along this minute and let some one else pack up and send your things to-morrow. You wouldn't have any bother that way and the quicker the better."

So it was settled, the great change made that in a few moments had transformed old Peter Debbs from

the dreaded unknown source of the double twins' pleasures, their forbidding, unwilling relative, to the dependent old grandfather whose life, as long as it should last, would be the chief care and responsibility of these four girls.

Now that they had come to him with their fresh young laughing faces, their bright eyes, their radiant hair, their abounding vitality, above all their warm pity and affection readily out-poured, old Peter Debbs could not see them depart. It ended in his housekeeper's actually making him ready to go away with them and his being carried off in the steady, swift car to the palace.

Rhoda had a fire burning on the hearth of the room which he was to have, for she rightly guessed that, though it was warm, the old man would be chilled by his drive. Elijah had been detailed to look after him at first. That long, glum-looking, but faithful and devoted personage, willingly undertook this duty, to which no other than a Chagford chauffeur could have been assigned.

Old Peter found himself cared for as never before, and he sank into his luxurious quarters with a sense of his bread-upon-the-waters proving to be the plummiest of cakes.

The double twins necessarily found the old man's presence in the palace somewhat burdensome, but, with the philosophy which was natural to them and

which early hardship had fostered, they assumed the burden gaily and, after a time, it lightened.

Maizie was his favorite, "because she went ahead," Maizie herself explained it. "There wasn't any other difference."

"You're getting chipper, grandfather," Maizie said one day, after old Peter had made a feeble joke and enjoyed it himself beyond its deserts. "You're growing more and more like your grandchildren!"

The old man chuckled. "You've done me good; I don't mind owning it," he said.

"Youth is catching," said Maizie. "So is fun. I'm glad you like us — or like it here."

"You're good girls," the old man said emphatically. "Good girls! I'm real pleased with you. Hazie said your birthday — yours and Daisy's — was next week. What do you want I should do for you?"

"Honest to goodness," said Maizie, relapsing into the old affirmation, "there doesn't seem to be one thing we want, not like presents. But if you could find a way of making Doctor Porter take that mortgage money back we'd be tickled pink, all of us!"

"Hard matter to do," said Peter Debbs shaking his head. "A man wants to pay his own bills, you see. But I thought I'd leave that, with something over and above, to him in my will, or to that little Nancy of his — how'd that be?"

"Splendid!" cried Maizie clapping her hands.

"That's just the way to do it! Why didn't we think of it, and how did you happen to?"

"You don't mind giving up part of what's coming to you?" suggested her grandfather, eyeing her curiously.

"Mercy, why should we? We don't need a bit more than we have!" cried Maizie. "But, Grandfather Mr. Debbs, I wonder if you'd let us shear the palace?"

"Hey?" said the old man.

"Shear the palace," Maizie laughed. "Cut off what it oughtn't to have and put on what it should have, make it over? It's a pretty awful house; all show and size and bad taste. People said so when we bought it, but we couldn't see it. Now we can, and that shows we've improved a heap! We'd like to change it; it could be really fine. Would you let us? It would cost a great deal, but it would be the best birthday present for all four of us, as well as the two whose birthday is on June tenth."

"Well, sir, if it don't beat all!" said Peter Debbs slowly. "A house like this ain't good enough for my granddaughters, old Peter Debbs' granddaughters! Why, it looks to me like about as handsome a edifice as I ever seen! But the world moves! I tell you, Mary, when your mother was born your grandmother and me was living in a little house for ten dollars a month, and proud of the way we'd got up in the

world. But this shows how far I must 'a' got up by now, if this mansion ain't good enough for my girl's girls. Go ahead and do what you want to. I'll pay for it. I've found out you're what I call lavish, but not wasteful, so go ahead."

Maizie ran to tell the other twins and Rhoda of this permission. That evening's mail took to Boston a summons to the best architect in that city, whom the double twins had been longing to call to transform the palace.

Mr. Olney, the architect, came to be the double twins' guest for several days. He measured, calculated, stood surveying the house from every point and then took possession of the library and drew his plans. They were done on the eve of the elder twins' birthday and the girls issued invitations to every one they knew well "to meet the palace plans."

Mrs. Deacon and Lora Bruce and her mother came, so did Lizzie Horn and, of course, Mr. Dermot and Tommy Giddings.

Tommy's air toward Taizie nowadays was that of an assured proprietor, but now he seemed castdown.

"It makes a fellow feel pretty uncomfortable to find you making plans to have one of the most truly splendid houses in Massachusetts, Taizie," he said, "a fellow that has only a good position, running mills, and a decent income. How'll I ever marry you?"

"Well, who in all this world ever asked you to marry me, Tommy Giddings!" cried Taizie. "Who's talking about marrying? I'm not eighteen years old and I've plenty of interesting things to do besides that! I'd rather run the car than a husband — now. But if you wanted to — some day — and if I did, well, of all silly talk that about fine houses and your salary is the silliest! Wouldn't Grandfather Debbs' money be enough? What would be the difference if he gave it to me and you helped me handle it? It's all the same, such things! But nobody's talking of marrying. Kurt Sweetair wrote Doctor Porter, when the doctor told them about grandfather's getting mad and cutting us off that time, that he hadn't supposed he could like Hazie better than he did, but the doctor's story made him. And Daisy got the loveliest set of three books from her newspaper friend, Despard Longacre, you ever saw to-day and a nice, *nice* birthday note!" added Taizie inconsistently.

"But nobody's talking of marrying, not even a long time hence!" laughed Tommy. "Maizie is the only one that hasn't a searchlight out after her."

"Maizie honestly would rather not be bothered," said Taizie. "But I suppose she'll go suddenly, quicker than any of us, likely. Tommy, we had a letter from Reginald Claude! He says he 'is going on steady in his work and he sees his balloon just a-floating to him' Isn't that funny? He wasn't

wicked; he isn't quite all there. I'm so glad he wasn't clapped into prison! Wasn't that a funny adventure of mine?"

"I remember it with much satisfaction, Miss Coggs," said Tommy solemnly. "Maizie is beckoning you, Taize."

The palace drawing-room was well filled with guests. Old Peter Debbs sat enjoying the scene, content at last with the result of his fortunate life. Dear little Grandma Emerson kept him company, her sprightly talk amusing him and making him feel young, for there were but a few months between their ages. The Misses Allaire were deep in the plans which Mr. Olney was showing them. Miss Belinda looked perfectly happy; she loved beauty and understood art, and the palace, transformed according to these plans, would be a delight to the eye.

Doctor and Mrs. Porter also leaned over the rail which had been placed before the plans to insure everybody's seeing them from the right distance.

The doctor could *see* them! Once more the double twins felt their hearts leap with joy at a new proof that their beloved old friend had received back his birthright, if only in part.

Mimi Hunt, Doris Clark, Cordie Tilden, Amabel Willis, Louise Willis, or rather Mrs. Miles Lawrence as she had been for some time, all were there.

The young people gathered around the piano and

Rick played for them to Nancy's accompaniment. Rick's violin playing increased each year in skill and beauty. Had he chosen he could have played to world-wide audiences, not to Chagford only. But the boy had elected to study medicine and settle down as Doctor Porter's successor, be to him the son he never had, with greater love than the average son can prove. Already it was understood, without words between them, that both hoped and knew that one day, when sweet Nancy awakened to womanhood, Rick would be the doctor's son in truth.

To-night Rick's playing surpassed itself. In a short time he had all the young people dancing, which was what he had meant to do, leading up to the carrying out of a plot between all of them, but the double twins.

Somehow they encircled Maizie, Daisy, Taizie and Hazie who stood, looking happy and uncommonly pretty in their white gowns, ensnared by their friends.

Rick, with his violin, sprang to join the circle and Nancy, jumping up from the piano, followed him.

Suddenly they all began to sing as Rick played, leaning forward to look into the surprised faces of the double twins, laughing, yet meaning what they sang.

And this was what they sang, doggerel rhymes, yet

sincere, based on the old count which the double twins themselves had made on their names:

" Maizie, Daisy, Taizie, Hazie, came and set our hearts ablaze.
Maizie, Daisy, Taizie, Hazie, twice two twins 'bout whom we're crazy!
We've a spell all spells above: C-o-g-g-s spells — Love!
Here's a count, all Chagford shouts it:
I-t it, they're it, who doubts it? "

THE END.

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